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GIANNINA RUSS *Courtesy Richard Bebb*

The RECORD COLLECTOR

A MAGAZINE FOR COLLECTORS OF RECORDED VOCAL ART

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GIANNINA RUSS

by Clifford Williams and John B. Richards

Giannina Russ is described in the Concise Oxford Dictionary of Opera as 'a notable Verdi soprano and famous Norma of her day'. Rodolfo Celletti in *Le Grandi Voci* considers that she was 'probably the only Italian singer in the first twenty years of the present century who succeeded in expressing completely the old formula of the soprano drammatico d'agilità'. The merits of Boninsegna, Burzio, Mazzoleni and Poli-Randaccio were probably also examined by Signor Celletti when he was making his judgement. As far as the present researches on Russ are concerned, they point clearly to the conclusion that her reputation was higher in Italy than among Anglo-American audiences.

Giannina was born in Lodi in 1878. At the Royal Conservatory of Milan she studied singing with Alberto Leoni, piano with Disma Fumagalli and declamation with Giuseppe Giacosa. She began her career in 1903 on the concert platform and scored her first important success at a charity function in the Teatro Lirico, Milan, on 5th April of that year. Next day the famous Milan newspaper, the *Corriere della Sera*, reported that Russ was 'very warmly received' when she sang Beethoven's 'Ah, perfido' and that she 'ably seconded' Tamagno in the 'Guarany' duet which had to be repeated (Appendix I). As regards Russ's stage début it would seem to have taken place in 'Bohème' at the Teatro Politeama d'Azeglio, Bologna on 13th June 1903, the opening night of the summer season. At least that is the earliest operatic performance by Russ which Alberto Bottazzi (see Appendix II) has been able to trace during his researches in Italian libraries. Reviewing the performance next day *Il Resto del Carlino*, the most important daily newspaper in Bologna, stated that the chief honours went to Signora Russ for the 'magnificent vocal gifts she displayed'; the audience was 'quickly captivated' and demanded a repeat of Mimi's aria which was sung, with a voice 'delicious in its freshness and equalized timbre'. The review referred to Russ as a young 'esordiente' (debutante or beginner) and prophesied that she would have a 'splendid career'.

That season at the d'Azeglio Russ also sang in six performances of 'Ballo in Maschera' and the first of them, on 21st July, brought the following comments from *Il Resto del Carlino*: 'In the difficult role of Amelia, Russ's magnificent voice and perfect intonation were greatly appreciated and aroused frequent applause'. The final performance of 'Ballo' on 4th August was her 'serata d'onore'. The large audience was very responsive and their enthusiasm reached a climax when Russ sang 'Bel raggio' from 'Semiramide', displaying not only the 'treasures of her voice' but also revealing 'great skill in passages of agility'. Besides floral tributes and various valuable gifts Russ was presented with a handsome album inscribed by Tamagno and containing his photograph. During the season Russ made eighteen appearances in 'Bohème' and the last of them, on 20th August, marked her farewell performance. That evening she was to have appeared with Paoli in 'Ballo' but the arrangement had to be cancelled owing to the tenor's indisposition.

A little later Russ sang Selika in 'Africana' and Leonora in 'Trovatore' at the Dal Verme, Milan and the *Corriere della Sera*, while praising her voice and technique, was critical of her interpretative and acting ability. She displayed 'neither passionate singing nor effective acting' stated the review referring to the first performance of 'Africana' on 7th November; she is 'a singer of rare merit' with a 'beautiful, ample, equalized, secure and admirably trained voice' and she sang the berceuse *Figlio del Sol*, 'deliciously', but in the fourth and fifth acts she lacked 'warmth and force of expression'. The review of her performance as Leonora on 4th December was shorter but similar: Russ is a singer who knows how to make telling use of a splendid voice but she is cold ('fredda'), absolutely too cold and inexpressive'.

After the Dal Verme engagement Russ travelled to Lisbon to take part in the three-month season of 1903/1904 at the San Carlo theatre. There she appeared in eight operas, quite a heavy commitment for a young artist with less than a year's experience of the stage. Five of the operas were by Verdi and among them were three—'Nabucco', 'Trovatore' and 'Vespri Siciliani'—which required the services of a dramatic coloratura soprano. So already early in her career Russ was taking a keen interest in the Verdian repertory and also showing the willingness and ability to cope with roles containing both dramatic and florid elements.

From Lisbon Russ went to Monte Carlo to take part in the performances of 'Aida' on the 26th and 30th March, 1904. 'Once again', wrote T. J. Walsh in Monte Carlo Opera, 'one must marvel at the casting: Caruso ... Renaud ... Guerrini ... and two splendid newcomers, Giannina Russ and Vittorio Arimondi ... Russ is not as well remembered as she deserves to be, for she had a full rich voice'. Writing in the *Journal de Monaco* on 5th April 1904 Platy remarked that the season came to a brilliant close with a superb performance of 'Aida'. One naturally assumes that Russ was entitled to some of the credit for the splendid outcome.

Three months later when Russ sang at Covent Garden in 'Aida' and 'Ballo in Maschera', with Caruso at her side in both cases, the critics were considerably less enthusiastic. Reviewing her debut as Aida on 13th June, the *Times* next day observed that her voice, a dramatic soprano, has 'persistent tremolo' and was 'not very pleasing' except when she sang softly. However, she sang in tune and 'knew exactly how to make her effects'.

When 'Ballo in Maschera' was revived on 29th June after a lapse of sixteen years, the Times felt that Russ 'appeared to greater advantage than before'. And in two centuries of Opera at Covent Garden one reads that 'her dramatic gifts (as Amelia) were appreciated' although 'her voice did not possess the suavity which the music requires'. Destinn also made her Covent Garden debut in 1904 season and was immediately recognized as an artist of the very first rank. It seems likely that her success was one reason why Russ was never again asked to sing at Covent Garden. Destinn on the other hand returned there every subsequent season until 1914 and again in 1919. It is interesting to note that P.G. Hurst, a great admirer of Destinn, nevertheless refers to Russ as a 'distinguished soprano' in his account of the 1904 season in *The Age of Jean de Reszke*.

After a season in Palermo where she sang in Donizetti's 'Poliuto' and Verdi's *Ernani* and *La Forza del Destino*, Russ realised the ambition of most aspiring Italian singers by fulfilling an engagement at La Scala. There in the 1904/5 season she appeared as Aida, Elisabeth in 'Tannhäuser' and the Countess in Mozart's 'Nozze di Figaro', all under the baton of Cleofonte Campanini. In 'Aida' she sang some of the nineteen performances, taking over from Boninsegna part way during the season. For Tannhäuser Slezak was 'brought specially from Germany but did not satisfy completely,' and although he was replaced by Angioletti for some of the later performances the impact of the opera 'remained mediocre'. Incidentally Elisabeth seems to have been the one Wagnerian role in Russ's repertory. For 'Figaro' there was a notable cast including Storchio, De Luca, Didur and Antonio and Gaetano Pini-Corsi.

Two reference books suggest that Russ sang in Paris about this time. The *Kutsch-Riemens Sängerlexicon* states that Russ 'was in Paris in 1904 where she partnered Patti and Tamagno'. The volume *Il Teatro Italiano 1913* reports that she sang 'in Paris at the Trocadero with Patti and Tamagno' (p274) but does not specify the date. Assuming that a concert really did take place in Paris with all three singers participating, the evidence so far available—not by any means conclusive—points to Spring 1903 and April 1905 as possible dates. (Appendix III).

In the two years following her debut Russ's advance had been rapid, taking her to Covent Garden, La Scala and other important European theatres. Now, in 1905, she was making the first step towards international status by sailing to Buenos Aires where she was due to open the season at the Teatro de la Opera on 24th May. That season at the Opera was notable for the presence of Puccini to see five of his operas mounted. He was there thanks to an invitation from the famous Argentine newspaper *La Prensa*, backed by the offer of free passages for himself and his wife and fifty thousand francs besides. Russ sang in one of the five operas concerned, the ill-fated 'Edgar', which Puccini had revised specially for the new production at the Teatro de la Opera (Carner's 'Puccini', p139). The role which Russ sang in the opera was Tigrana, a Carmen-like part whose music exists in two alternative versions, 'one low and simple, the other high and florid' (Carner p295). No doubt she made use of the latter version. 'Edgar' was new to her repertory and so were two other operas she sang that season; Mascagni's 'Amica' and Verdi's 'Rigoletto'. 'Aida', 'Ballo' and Berlioz 'Damnation of Faust' completed her sextet of operas, all conducted by Mugnone. Anselmi and Giraltoni were in the casts of 'Rigoletto' and 'Amica', Zenatello was

her partner in the other operas. When the Company moved on to Montevideo for a short visit, Russ was kept busy singing four operas in the space of eight days.

The period December 1905 to April 1906 was occupied by a tour to the Middle East with a company whose star was Gemma Bellincioni. The places visited included Alexandria, Cairo, Alexandria again and then Athens, Tom Kaufman reports. 'Aida', 'Tannhäuser', 'La Wally' and 'Asrael' were the operas in which Russ appeared. 'Asrael' was the earliest opera composed by the Italian, Alberto Franchetti, and was first given on 11th February 1888. His 'Germania', 'Figlia di Jorio' and 'Christoforo Colombo' are better known to collectors.

By this time Russ had received an invitation from Oscar Hammerstein to sing in his first season (1906/7) at the Manhattan Theatre in New York. Hammerstein had no money to fund his productions other than the profits from his own vaudeville theatre; nevertheless he was determined to challenge single-handed the entrenched and society-backed Metropolitan Opera. He built the Manhattan Opera House to his own design and formed a brilliant company for his initial season there. The chorus he engaged was a revelation to the critics, who also commended the orchestra highly and above all extolled the virtues of the principal conductor, Cleofonte Campanini. That first season, however, Hammerstein's company of singers was dangerously close to minimum level. He had only Russ for all the dramatic soprano roles in Italian opera, only one lyric-coloratura soprano, Pinkert, until Melba arrived and only one leading dramatic contralto, De Cisneros. On the male side Bonci, Bassi, Dalmores and Arimondi were the only principal singers in their respective fields. (Sheean, p. 138). Fortunately Hammerstein was blessed with exceptional luck for not one of his leading singers, Renaud apart, developed bronchial troubles or other illnesses.

The following account of the two seasons in which Russ took part leans heavily on Sheean's book *The Amazing Oscar Hammerstein and Cone's Oscar Hammerstein's Manhattan Opera Company*.

Very early in the first season the critics decided that the women in Hammerstein's casts were on the whole 'not good enough'. When Russ made her debut on 12th December in 'Don Giovanni' it was noted that she had 'the requisite style' but 'her voice was too explosive and unsteady' (Cone, page 66). For 'Aida' on 19th December Hammerstein provided a lavish production and Campanini's reading of the score was 'exhilarating'. Yet at first, states Sheean (p161), the opera was not well received although eventually it did become 'a popular production' and for this some credit must obviously go to Russ. Yet the critics were unenthusiastic about her, and while acknowledging her sincerity as an artist described her voice as 'not altogether pleasing'. (Cone p.69). When 'Trovatore' was given on 1st January 1907 under Tanara, Dalmores and De Cisneros sang well but Russ was still adjudged 'rough'. Eagerly awaited, Melba arrived in early January to fulfill her contract with Hammerstein and her mere presence had the effect of putting the Company on its toes. As a result, all subsequent performances and not merely those in which she appeared showed an improvement (Sheean, p163). Certainly 'Les Huguenots' (sung in Italian) on 18th January drew 'a huge house' and had an excellent press; and Russ (Valentine) and Pinkert (Marguerite) previously criticised now received praise. Indeed in the opinion of the New York Evening Post on 19th

January, the duet in Act 4 sung by Russ and Bassi 'had not been so well given since Nordica and Jean de Reszke were heard in it'. When 'Ballo' was mounted on 27th February with its setting in Boston at the time of the Puritans, Sammarco proved a 'superb' Renato and Russ, Zeppilli, Bassi and Arimondi were 'admirable' in their roles (Cone p83). On the last night of the season, 20th April 1907, a very large and appreciative audience witnessed a splendid performance of 'Aida', in which Russ 'was now doing very well indeed' (Sheean p182). It was the twelfth performance of the opera and the only one in which there was a change of cast, Sammarco coming in for Ancona. As with other Hammerstein productions, the practice of keeping the cast of an opera virtually unchanged throughout the season resulted in first-rate team work and a very satisfying ensemble. Russ sang 35 times during the twenty-week season and, despite the lukewarm press for her early performances, must have been greatly encouraged by the much warmer tone of the later notices. She now also had the satisfaction of being recognized as an artist of international standing.

The second Manhattan season (1907/8) was a splendid affair dominated by the presence of Mary Garden and Luisa Tetrazzini. Garden and the three French operas in which she excelled—Thaïs, Louise, *Pelleas et Melisande*—had never previously been heard in North or South America; and the success of Hammerstein's bold initiative in bringing them to New York opened up a new chapter in American operatic history. More in the way of French opera during the season led to a curtailment in the volume of Italian opera; and as Hammerstein now had an abundance of principal sopranos at his disposal, Russ's services were not in such great demand as in 1906/7. The season opened on 4th November 1907 with Nordica (now aged 50) in 'Gioconda', but after singing three Giocondas and three Aidas she left the Company before the month was out. Russ sang the remaining Gioconda and four of the six subsequent Aidas. She also appeared in all four performances of 'Ballo', all three of 'Don Giovanni' and sang twice in 'Cavalleria Rusticana' and three times in 'Trovatore'. On 11th December, she sang in 'Ernani' which was badly received and not repeated. Garden's illness early in the season, from 13th December to 3rd January, caused a crisis and resulted in a major rearrangement of the programme. Certain operas had to be repeated fairly often and some of the previous season's productions had to be hastily prepared for performance. 'Don Giovanni' was one of the latter and after Campanini had rehearsed it for several hours on 27th December—'Ballo' was due to be given that evening—the tired orchestra refused to practise any longer (Sheean p223). In a rage Campanini threatened to walk out of the house and it needed all Hammerstein's powers of persuasion to relieve the tension between conductor and players. To illustrate the repetitions in the programme and the frequency with which some singers were called on during Garden's indisposition, here are details of five appearances which Russ made during the course of six consecutive days: 27 Dec. Ballo; 28 Dec. Don Giovanni; 29 Dec. no performance (Sunday); 30 Dec. Don Giovanni; 31 Dec. Rusticana; 1 Jan. (1908) Ballo. Inevitably the spacing of Russ's appearances showed an unusual lack of balance and she sang only three times in the last two months of the season. By way of compensation during this period she had the opportunity of watching Garden weaving her magic spells. And she must surely have listened to Tetrazzini, who made her sensational New York debut on 15th

January 1908 and sang over twenty times before the end of the season, always to crowded houses causing near mass hysteria by her dazzling flights of coloratura.

During the summer of 1907, in the interval between her two Manhattan seasons, Russ was engaged in a tour of Chile and sang the role of Norma in Santiago. This may have been her first appearance in the part and came barely four years after her debut; certainly it is her earliest performance as Norma that the present researches have uncovered. Perhaps it was in the nature of a 'try-out', to test the reactions not only of the audience but also of Russ herself. Whatever the motive Russ gained a success and just over a year later embarked on a series of performances in Italy. From then on Norma ranked as her favourite role even though it posed the greatest challenge of her career. When composing his masterpiece Bellini breathed life into the statuesque figures' of old classical opera, wrote Dyneley Hussey, and 'Norma will no doubt return to the stage whenever a singer is born capable of singing her music', he continued. There lies the rub; for the vocal demands are immense, stemming from the extraordinary vocal qualities of the first interpreter, Gioditta Pasta, for whom Bellini wrote the part. (See Appendix V). In addition the interpretative problems of the role are very considerable. The dearth of great protagonists has probably been the main reason for the long intervals between successive revivals of 'Norma' in the principal theatres of the operatic world. At the Metropolitan there was a 35-year gap between the performance of Lilli Lehmann in 1892 and the next ones with Ponselle in 1927. Covent Garden tells a similar story: after Lilli Lehmann in 1899 the opera was not performed there for 30 years (Ponselle 1929, 1930) after which another 22 years elapsed before the arrival of Callas in 1952. (T. Regio Turin Guide, 'Norma', p179).

It was in the Teatro Verdi, Florence on 7th November 1908 that Russ sang her first Norma in Italy. Next day in La Nazione the critic Jarro gave her considerable praise:

La Signora Reuss (!) is a true artist with a rich voice; she has a beautiful method of singing except for some liberties relating to emission and some peculiarities in her interpretation.... Perhaps one would wish her to show a greater force at some points, a greater dramatic expression. And too often her face remains impassive in moments of strong emotion, as though she were singing in a concert instead of representing a character in a tragedy. These reservations apart, her interpretation is admirable; and if there are any artists who can equal her (in the role) we believe that they are rare.

A few weeks later Russ sang six performances of 'Norma' at the Carlo Felice, Genoa and the house was filled to overflowing on the first night, 21st January 1909. Thirty-six years had passed since the opera had last been performed there. 'The audience expected great things and were not disappointed', said one report; ... 'Russ and Guerrini were applauded enthusiastically after their duets'. A little later (February) Russ began a series of six performances at the Teatro Regio, Turin and about this time she sang two performances of the opera in Parma. Referring to the Parma performance of 27th February 1909, a passage in Alcarì's History of the Regio Theatre, Parma describes Russ as an 'unsurpassable' Norma both as regards 'voice and action' and states that she won 'frenzied applause'

throughout. Exaggerated language, the reader may say; yet there is no doubt that Russ was very successful. After commending Garibaldi's Adalgisa, the passage ends by observing that 'the performance was certainly the best' in the period covered by Alcari, namely 1883-1929. Russ continued to sing Norma frequently, appearing in the following cities: Bergamo, Milan (Dal Verme), Naples in 1909; Rome, Buenos Aires, Barcelona in 1910; Mantua*, Palermo, Catania in 1911. So in a period of three years starting with her appearances in Florence in 1908 she sang a total of fourteen series of performances as Norma; a remarkable achievement. Her subsequent appearances in the role were more widely spaced, according to our present information: La Scala, Genoa, Turin in 1913; Parma Bologna in 1914; Florence, Verona in 1916; Asti in 1918 and Milan (Arena) in 1920. Here one must remember that during the First World War, Italian newspapers and journals gave little or no coverage to events in the theatre. So further appearances may come to light in the course of time e.g. when the Annals of certain theatres are published.

The circumstances relating to the Scala performances in 1913 are worthy of mention. After the revival of 'Norma' at the theatre in 1871 no further performances of the opera were given there until 1892, a gap of 21 years; and a further 20 years went by before the next performance in 1912. These latter were part of the 1911/12 season, when Eugenia Burzio sang the title role. In view of the long intervals between preceeding revivals it seemed most unlikely that there would be another revival in the very next season, 1912/13, and in fact the opera was not listed in the official programme. However owing to the illness of De Muro some performances of 'Carmen' had to be cancelled and another opera substituted at very short notice. The choice fell on 'Norma', partly because the scenery was available and partly because Russ was already on the spot, singing in the 1912/13 season. Four performances were given, starting on 23rd March 1913 (Easter Sunday) with Russ, Garibaldi, Ferrari-Fontana and De Angelis under Serafin. The opening performance was quite successful, stated the *Corriere della Sera* of 25th March: 'Russ especially was applauded. In 'Casta diva, in the duet 'In mia mano alfin tu sei' and in the whole of the grand finale of the opera she sang in excellent style, with uncommon vocal intensity and agility and with good dramatic accent. We would wish her to be more impetuous in the outbursts of passion, warmer at times, trembling more with indignation, with love and with jealousy; but that which may seem to be her self-possession is never without the power of communicating emotion'. (See Appendix VIII for review of 1909 Turin performances).

Summing up: the researches for this article show that Russ took part in twenty four revivals of 'Norma' in twenty four different theatres, all but four of them in Italy. Several of her distinguished Italian contemporaries also sang in 'Norma': Boninsegna appeared in a few performances in Trieste in 1904, Burzio in the Scala performances of 1912 and also in Florence the same year, and Mazzoleni in Bologna in 1910, in Venice in 1912 and in Florence in 1919. It must be admitted that we have done little research into the appearances of these ladies in Bellini's opera and we agree that it is risky to generalise on the strength of the few facts listed above e.g. Mazzoleni may have sung the role fairly often. Nevertheless reference to the Enciclo-

*See Appendix VII for details of the Mantua performances in 1911.

pedia dello Spettacolo and to *Le Grandi Voci* in no way suggested that Norma figured as prominently in the repertory of any one of the three singers mentioned as it did in that of Russ. Bearing in mind, then, that Russ sang the role successfully throughout the length and breadth of Italy during the first two decades of the present century, our conclusion is that during this period it was she who made the most significant contribution to the history of Bellini's master work in her native land. Incidentally the Argentinian soprano Juanita Capella, who died very young (at 29?), made a great impact with her Norma in various Italian cities from 1911 to 1914; and Lauri Volpi wrote about her most enthusiastically in *Voci Parallele* (2nd edn p.75).

Having chosen to discuss Russ's activities in 'Norma' altogether rather than piecemeal, the story of her other operatic performances will now be continued from the year 1908 onwards, although not always in strict chronological order.

In the summer of 1908 Russ paid a flying visit to Vienna to sing one performance as Donna Anna in 'Don Giovanni' at the Hofoper. Among the cast were Ancona (protagonist) and Bonci, both of whom had been her colleagues in the opening performance of the same opera at the Manhattan in 1906. Her next engagement abroad was to sing again at the Teatro de la Opera in Buenos Aires during the three-month season of 1910. Opened in 1872 this theatre played a very important part for many years in the operatic life of the city (Appendix IV). Caruso sang there in 1899, 1900, 1901 and 1903 and Toscanini spent several seasons there in the period 1901 to 1906. However the Opera lost its supremacy when the magnificent new Colón theatre opened its doors in 1908; and when Caruso made his last two visits to the Argentine in 1915 and 1917 it was at the Colón that he appeared. The foregoing does not imply that the 1910 season at the Opera was a second-class affair. How could that possibly be true when the company numbered Russ, Garibaldi, Zenatello, Smirnov, Stracciari, De Angelis and Mardones among its members? Also in the company was Galli Curci, young fresh-voiced and with more than three years' stage experience. As yet, however, she had not hit the headlines and was assigned only secondary roles that season (but see Appendix VI). Russ sang in three Verdi operas: 'Otello' with Zenatello and Stracciari; 'Aida' with Garibaldi, Zenatello and De Angelis; and 'Ballo' with Galli Curci, Garibaldi, Dygas and Stracciari. It should be mentioned that these are the only appearances of Russ as Desdemona in 'Otello' that have been brought to our notice. Her other operas that season were 'Norma' with Garibaldi, Dygas and De Angelis and 'Amica' with Taccani and Stracciari.

A few months later in the autumn of 1910 Russ went abroad again, on this occasion to the Liceo Theatre in Barcelona where she had the honour of opening the season on 30th November. The opera was Spontini's 'Vestale', first produced in 1807 some twenty-four years before 'Norma'. Rarely performed now, the long classical melodies of 'La Vestale' demand purity of line, dignity of style, shapeliness of phrasing and sufficient variety and warmth of tone to temper their severity (See Gilman's review, *Seltsam's Metropolitan Annals* p450). That the score also contains dramatic passages is indicated by the recordings of Ponselle and Callas, particularly the latter's on 33CX 1540. Lacking contemporary reviews and gramophone recordings in the case of Russ, it can be assumed that she coped well with the

vocal demands but one would like to know how she dealt with the moments of great emotion. Her other operas at the Liceo were 'Norma', 'Tannhäuser' and Raccani's 'Julia' in which she sang the title role.

Further confirmation of her international status, if it was still needed, came in the form of an invitation to visit Russia and sing at St. Petersburg in January and February 1912. There in the Grande Theatre du Conservatoire she appeared in 'Tannhäuser' with Carasa (tenor), Battistini and Arimondi, in 'Ballo' with the same artists and in 'Ugonotti' with Boronat, Carasa and Arimondi.

Moving back to Italy, to the Scala season of 1912/12, Russ appeared in 'Oberon' and 'Don Carlo', as well as in 'Norma' which has already been discussed. When 'Oberon' was produced on 18th February 1913, some 86 years after the London premiere, it was the first stage performance of the opera in Italy. Contemporary reports indicate that the Scala management took great pains to make the venture successful; lavish and imaginative scenery was provided and the recitatives were set to music by Grandaur and Wüllner. Russ sang the exacting role of Reiza, Cesa Bianchi the even more demanding role of Huon and Serafin conducted. A brief comment in Gatti's *Il Teatro alla Scala*, Volume I page 251, reads: 'va in scena Oberon con buonissimo esito. Il pubblico l'accoglie bene'—'Oberon' was produced with very fine results and given a welcome by the public. A review in Vallardi's *Il Teatro Italiano* (1913) praised several scenes but remarked that complete success was not possible with a work deficient in unity, which had been made more obscure by merciless cuts. 'Don Carlo' which was beginning to attract attention again, had opened the season on 26th October 1912 with a distinguished cast including Russ, Magliulo, De Muro, Galeffi (Scala debut), De Angelis and Berardi under Serafin's direction. Pozza's general remarks about the opera in *Il Corriere* would raise a smile today: too long, despite the elimination of the first act; few pages truly inspired; too many old Meyerbeerian formulae. The cast, he said, had beautiful voices but except for Galeffi lacked the requisite style. 'A good result' is the verdict in Gatti (Vol. I p.249). On the other hand Vallardi's *Il Teatro Italiano* reported that the opera 'did not meet with general approval despite the excellent performance'. Audiences in Rome showed more liking for 'Don Carlo'. Indeed Russ had sung ten performances of the opera at the Costanzi in Rome during January—February 1910 with a splendid cast which included Garibaldi, Bassi, De Luca, Walter and Ciroto under Mascagni's direction. Later, in 1918/19 she was to sing a further ten performances of the opera in Rome, again at the Costanzi. Here the reader is reminded that Verdi made three versions of the score:

1. 5 acts with ballet, premiere Paris 1867 in French; translated into Italian.
2. 4 acts without the Fontainebleau scene, first performed La Scala 1884 in Italian.
3. revised 5 act score without ballet, first performed Moderna Dec. 1886 in Italian; usually regarded as the definitive score.

Unfortunately the second and third versions arrived when nearly the whole of the Verdi repertory was about to suffer a steep world-wide decline, caused mainly by the spread of Wagnerism and, from 1890 onwards, by the extraordinary popularity of 'verismo' opera. Certainly the fortunes of 'Don Carlo' were at a very low ebb for about a quarter of a century. Then

suddenly at the beginning of 1910 the opera was relaunched in good style as far as Italy was concerned. There were fourteen performances of the four act version at the San Carlo in Naples beginning on 14th January and ten performances at the Constanzi, already mentioned, which made use of the revised five act score. Afterwards 'Don Carlo' managed to keep a place, although rather subordinate, in the Verdian repertory. Only in comparatively recent years has it received recognition as one of the greatest of the composer's operas. (Much of the above information is based on the article by G. Gualerzi on pages 494-504 of the *Atti* (Don Carlos/Don Carlo) published by the Istituto di Studi Verdiani, Parma in 1971).

The centenary of Verdi's birth in 1913 focussed attention in Italy on the sad state of neglect into which most of the composer's operas had fallen and brought the realisation that a new approach to the whole of his repertory was overdue. The year itself was marked in various Italian cities by productions of a number of Verdi's operas, including a high proportion of works which had been staged rarely, perhaps not at all, during the long Verdi 'recession'. In September there were productions of 'Falstaff' and 'Traviata' in Busseto directed by Toscanini and they were followed by performances of 'Nabucco', 'Aida', 'Falstaff' and 'Otello' at La Scala. Russ did not have the honour of singing in these, the most notable of all the celebrations. Nevertheless she did take part in the important events in Parma directed by Campanini during September and October 1913. Apart from a performance of 'Rigoletto' in the Reinach Theatre, the operas involved were staged in the Regio Theatre and consisted of 'Oberto', 'Nabucco', 'Ballo', 'Aida', 'Falstaff', and 'Don Carlo'. There was also a performance of the 'Requiem'. Russ sang in all except 'Oberto', 'Rigoletto' and 'Falstaff'. The following account is based on information from the files of the newspaper, the *Gazzetta di Parma* (thanks to the researches of Signor Bottazzi), on Alcari's History of the Regio Theatre and on the Chronology of the same theatre by Cervetti and Del Monte. The performances of 'Nabucco' took place on September 10th and 13th. Reports indicate that De Angelis was a superb Zaccaria and that Russ won great applause as Abigaille for her 'exceptional skill' in maintaining even in the most difficult moments an 'exquisitely correct and aristocratic' style. In 'Ballo', produced on September 14th and 20th, Russ proved an 'unsurpassable' Amelia, displaying a 'powerful voice which she modulated with great art and with surprising agility and security'. Her impressive high notes were 'bright and resonant' and she expressed perfectly 'the tumult of Amelia's passion'. Bonci's Riccardo aroused extraordinary enthusiasm and Maggie Teyte was very successful as Oscar. In a third performance of the opera on 26th September Rosa Raisa sang Amelia. Russ appeared in only one of the three performances of 'Aida' when she substituted for the indisposed Caroline White on 17th September. Once again she gave proof of her 'extended range' and 'perfect method of singing'; in the third act in particular she combined effectively the full resources of her artistic temperament. The youthful Martinelli as Radames won the audience's favour in no uncertain manner. Ruffo was to have sung Rodrigo in 'Don Carlo' but his indisposition delayed the production and eventually he had to withdraw. As a result there was only a single performance, on 5th October. In this Russ scored a success as Elisabetta, 'enchanting' the audience with her 'beautiful vibrant' voice. In the last performance of the Festival, the 'Requiem' on 11th October, Russ

sang with 'rare skill' and 'perfect intonation' while Bonci was again singled out for special praise. There were one hundred players in the orchestra and the chorus, numbering five hundred, consisted of the chorus of the Regio Theatre together with the Beethoven Choral Society of Paris. According to Vallardi's *Il Teatro Italiano* the French Under-Secretary of Fine Arts was present at the performance. The Festival had opened appropriately with Verdi's first opera 'Oberto' which was presented on September 6th and 8th with Raisa, Frascani, Cristalli and Masini Pieralli. Later, on October 1st and 4th, Verdi's last opera 'Falstaff' was given with Sammarco as protagonist and Marie Delna as Quickly. Campanini's contribution as Artistic Director and conductor of all the productions in the Regio earned him great praise. Whether he conducted 'Rigoletto' at the Reinach on 8th October we are unable to say. The cast on that occasion included Giorgini, Sammarco as protagonist, Arimondi and probably Maria Crosa as Gilda.

A little later in Rome, Russ took part in some further performances of the 'Requiem' given in the Teatro Augusteo on November 21st, 23rd and 26th under the auspices of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia. Her colleagues were Guerrini, Bonci and De Angelis and Edoardo Mascheroni conducted.

In addition to Bellini the other important Italian composers of the early nineteenth century, Rossini and Donizetti, were represented to some extent in Russ's programme. During her career she sang only one opera of Bellini's, 'Norma', and only one of Donizetti's, 'Poliuto'. But whereas 'Norma' provided her with her most important and greatest role, which she sang many times in many different theatres, her appearances in 'Poliuto' were confined to a single series of performances in Palermo in the autumn of 1904. After that, according to our information, she made no further stage appearances in any of Donizetti's operas. Rossini fared rather better than Donizetti for Russ sang in his 'Semiramide', 'William Tell' and 'Mosè in Egitto' and also in the 'Stabat Mater'. The 'Semiramide' performances took place in Lisbon during February 1904, less than a year after her debut. The Costanzi in Rome was the scene of her appearances in 'William Tell'; Battistini and Kaschmann shared the role of Tell and Gilion sang Arnold in all but two of the eight performances, which were given during March and April 1911. Its inordinate length 'prevents the opera from becoming a firm repertory favourite', to quote from the Oxford Dictionary of Opera. 'Mosè' is another of Rossini's operas not often performed today. It has had a number of revivals this century, of course. In Italy during April and May 1915, for instance, there were performances of the opera in Rome (Quirino), Florence (Verdi?), Bologna (Comunale) and Milan (Dal Verme). Mascagni conducted and the cast, given in detail in the List of Appearances, remained virtually the same. De Angelis sang the role of Mosè and Russ that of Anaide, the Jewish girl who is the main cause of contention between Pharaoh and the Jews. Reviewing the performance at Bologna on 8th May, *Il Resto del Carlino* reported: 'Tonal beauty and a warm penetrating accent enabled Russ to give the greatest significance to the part of Anaide. Her dramatic power and exquisite style of singing lent uncommon distinction to various passages in the duets which form the most important elements of the role.' Three years later there was a splendid revival of the opera at La Scala which ran to thirteen performances during the 1918/19 season. 'Mosè' had not been heard there for nearly fifty years. Serafin conducted and the only survivors from the 1915 performances just mentioned were De Angelis and

Russ and Dolci as Amènofi, Pharaoh's son. Gatti's *Il Teatro alla Scala*, Volume I page 267, states that the performances were 'applauded enthusiastically' and that De Angelis presented 'a majestic figure', dignified in bearing with tone both 'powerful and mellow'. (Incidentally, De Angelis made a recording of two excerpts from the opera, which were issued on Columbia D18070, and his singing of the 'Invocazione' on one side is truly magnificent.)

Glancing down the list of engagements fulfilled by Russ in the latter part of her career, one notes that she continued to sing a considerable variety of roles for a time. In 1915 she appeared in 'Ballo' in Turin, 'Loreley' (for the first time in her career apparently) in Pavia, 'Faust' in Verona and 'Mosè' in several Italian cities. In 1916 there were performances of 'Norma' and Verdi's 'Battaglia di Legnano' in Florence — the latter opera another first ever for Russ, according to our information. The year 1917 saw her in performances of Ponchielli's 'Gioconda' in Rome and in 1918 she appeared in 'Mosè' at La Scala, 'Ernani' in Florence and 'La Forza' in Bergamo. The year 1919 was a busy one and included 'Don Carlo' and 'Ballo' in Rome, 'Loreley' in Genoa, 'Ballo' in Naples and Fabriano (in both cases with Bonci), 'Ernani' in Bergamo and 'Africana' and 'Nabucco' in Turin. Afterwards her appearances in opera according to our information were much rarer. In the summer of 1920 she went to Switzerland to sing in 'Ballo' with Battistini and in 'Gioconda', both at the State Theatre in Zurich. A little later she was heard in 'Norma' in the Milan Arena where the third performance, on 11th August, had to be abandoned after Act I owing to heavy rain. After 1920 our data shows only one further operatic engagement. This was in Vicenza where the birth centenary of the composer Apollini, who was born in the town, was celebrated in May 1922 by staging his opera 'L'Ebreo'. The cast included Russ, Dolci and Molinari and Vigna conducted. According to the testimony of Maestro Votto, Russ also sang Gilda in 'Rigoletto' while she was in Vicenza.

Russ continued with concert engagements until 1925 at least, perhaps later still. One concert in Milan in February 1925 must be mentioned for Russ's contribution included the duet 'Deh! con te li prendi' from 'Norma' in which her partner was Conchita Supervia (see Appendix VII).

After retiring Russ took up teaching and among her pupils, it is said, were Gina Cigna (herself a notable Norma), Maria Benedetti, Clara Petrella and Margherita Grandi.

Russ died in the Casa di Riposo, Milan, on 28th February 1951.

Russ did the greater part of her singing in Italy and was certainly more appreciated there than elsewhere, probably for the simple reason that she gave of her best only where she felt most at ease, in the familiar surroundings of her native land. So it is fitting to end this biographical sketch with an assessment of her capabilities by Rodolfo Celletti, Italy's leading authority on the voice and vocal artistry in general. In *Le Grandi Voci* he wrote: 'Her voice, of marvellous timbre and silvery brightness, homogeneous and resonant in every register, was emitted with a fluidity and lightness truly 'belcantistic'. The great volume and diamond-like ring did not prejudice in the slightest the sweetness of the vocal quality nor of the expression. As a result 'Tutto sorride intorno' (Mosè), 'Casta Diva' (Norma), Elizabeth's Prayer (Tannhäuser) and 'La Vergine degli Angeli' (La Forza) acquired from her lips a celestial purity not usually found in the

singing of dramatic sopranos. Vocally impeccable as executant and stylist, her weak point was in the interpretative field; temperamentally indeed, she was rather cool and restrained and she had limited acting ability.

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 drama, films, opera, etc. Rome 1954-1962 approx.
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List of Appearances

The casts are nearly always given in the order: soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, baritone, bass and occasionally the letters s, ms, t, b, bs have been inserted after certain names to indicate these categories. The conductor when known is stated separately after the details of the cast.

Thanks are due to all those who have co-operated unselfishly in supplying information. Readers are asked to inform the Editor of any errors and omissions.

1903

MILAN, Lirico.

Concert with Tamagno and others. April 5.

BOLOGNA, Politeama D'Azeglio.

BOHEME. Russ, Amelia Cremona, Rambaldi/Giorgi (Rodolfo), Aneschi (Marcello), Belletti, Beccucci (Colline), Cremona, Tanara.

June 13 (opening night), 14, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 29.

July 1, 2, 15, 16, 19, 23. August 19, 20.

BALLO IN MASCHERA. Russ, Cremona, Ponzano (Ulrica), Ghilardini (Riccardo), Aneschi (Renato), Beccucci, Carozzi. Tanara.

July 21, 22, 25, 26, 30. August 4.

THE RECORD COLLECTOR

MILAN, Dal Verme.

AFRICANA. Russ, Parpagnoli (Inez), Biel (t), La Puma (b). Moranzoni.

November 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 23, 30. December 2.

TROVATORE. Russ, De Cisneros, Biel, La Puma. Moranzoni.

December 5, 6, 8, 10.

1903/4

LISBON, San Carlo. December 1903–March 1904.

AFRICANA. Russ, Biel (t), Giraltoni (b), Arimondi (bs), from December 23.

ERNANI. Russ, Cosentino (t), Giraltoni/Ancona, Arimondi, from December 26.

TROVATORE. Russ, De Cisneros, Biel, Pacini (b). Starani, from January 8.

SEMIRAMIDE. Russ, De Cisneros, Zucchi (t), Arimondi, from February 4.

NABUCCO. Russ, De Cisneros (Fenena), Giussani (Anna), Zucchi (Ismaele), Pacini (protag.), Mansueto (Zaccaria). Lombardi, from February 11.

VESPRI SICILIANI. Russ, Cosentino (t), Pacini (b), Mansueto (bs), February (?).

BALLO. Russ, De Cisneros, Cecchi (t), Ancona, from March 13.

FAUST. Russ, De Cisneros, Bonci, Ancona, Arimondi, from March 15.

1904

MONTE CARLO

AIDA. Russ, Guerrini, Caruso, Renaud, Arimondi, Aumonier. Vigna.

March 26, 28.

CONCERT, International Jockey Club.

Russ sang Bel Raggio, Cherubino's aria (Figaro). April.

FLORENCE. Late April or early May.

CONCERT. Russ sang Bel Raggio, La Wally aria, Guarany duet with Tamagno.

RAVENNA, Alighieri.

DAMNATION OF FAUST. Russ, Krismer, De Luca. 17pf. May.

LONDON, Covent Garden.

AIDA. Russ/Destinn, Lunn, Caruso, Scotti. Mancinelli. 4pf. from June 13.

BALLO. Russ, Kurz, Frascani, Caruso, Scotti. Mancinelli. 4pf. June 29.

SALSOMAGGIORE, nr PIACENZA. October.

CONCERT for Duchess of Aosta and Prince of Orleans. Russ sang Bel Raggio, Cieli Azzurri (Aida), L'altra Notte (Mefistofele) and Don Giovanni duet w. De Luca.

PALERMO, Politeama Garibaldi.

POLIUTO. Russ, Cosentino (t), Arcangeli (b). Oscar Anselmi, from October 29(?).

LA FORZA. Russ, Cosentino, from November 19(?)

THE RECORD COLLECTOR

ERNANI. Russ, Cosentino, Arcangeli, Carozzi (bs), from November 30(?).

BOHEME. Bice Adams, Russ (Musetta), Ventura, Schlotter, Tegani, Carozzi.

1904/5

MILAN, La Scala.

AIDA. Boninsegna/Russ, Guerrini/Olitzka, De Marchi/Gamba, Stracciari, Gaudio, Wullman. Campanini. 19pf. from December 18.

TANNHÄUSER. Russ, Orbellini (Venus), Slezak/Angioletti, Sammarco/De Luca, Gaudio/Didur. Campanini. 10pf. from January 18.

NOZZE DI FIGARO. Russ, Storchio (Susanna), Teresa Ferraris, De Luca (Figaro), Didur (Count), A. & G. Pini Corsi (Bartolo, Basilio). Campanini. 5pf. from March 15.

1905

BOLOGNA, Comunale.

CONCERT. Russ, Bonci; excerpts Don Pasquale, William Tell. Toscanini. April 3.

BUENOS AIRES. T. de la Opera. Conductor Mugnone.

AIDA. Russ, Lavin de Casas (ms), Zenatello, Nani (b), Didur. May 24, 30. June 10. July 18.

BALLO. Russ, L. de Casas, Zeppilli, Zenatello, Nani/Bonini, Ercolani, Thos. 5pf. from June 15.

DAMNATION OF FAUST. Russ, Zenatello, Didur, Ercolani. 4pf. from June 22.

EDGAR. R. Giachetti, Russ, Zenatello, Nani, Ercolani. 2pf. from July 8.

RIGOLETTO. Russ, L. de Casas, Anselmi, Giraldoni. July 11 (1 pf.).

AMICA. Russ (Amica), Anselmi (Giorgio), Giraldoni (Rinaldo). 3pf. from August 8.

BUENOS AIRES, Circolo Italiano. July 24.

PUCCINI CONCERT. Giachetti, Russ, Storchio, Zenatello, Anselmi, Didur.

MONTEVIDEO, Solis.

AIDA. Russ, L. de Casas, Zenatello, Nani, Didur. August 19.

AMICA. Russ, Anselmi, Giraldoni. August 24.

BALLO. Russ, Zenatello, Bonini (b). August 25.

DAMNATION OF FAUST. Russ, Zenatello, Bonini. August 26.

1905/6

ALEXANDRIA, Zizinia.

AIDA. Russ, L. de Casas, Longobardi (t), Amato, Nicolay (bs). from Dec. 7(?).

TANNHÄUSER. Russ, Longobardi, Amato, Nicolay. from January 1(?).

1906

CAIRO, Khediviale.

AIDA. Cast as at Alexandria. from January 13.

THE RECORD COLLECTOR

- TANNHÄUSER. Cast as at Alexandria. from January 21.
 LA WALLY. Russ, Zeppilli, Palet (t). from February 8.
 ASRAEL. Russ, Longobardi, Nicolay. March.
ALEXANDRIA, Zizinia.
 LA WALLY. Russ, Zeppilli, Palet, Amato. from March 22.
 ASRAEL. Russ, Lavin de Casas, Longobardi, Nicolay. March.
ATHENS
 AIDA. Russ, L. de Casas, Lunardi (t), Amato, Nicolay. April 15(?).
ATHENS, Parnassus.
 CONCERT. Russ sang Mimi's aria and Musetta's Waltz (Bohème).
 April.
MILAN, Dal Verme
 AMICA. Russ, Grassi (Giorgio), Benedetti (Rinaldo). Masagni.
 October 18, 20, 23, 24, 27, 28, 30. November 1, 3, 4, 7, 10,
 14, 17, 21, 25, 28. December 9, 11 (Russ was singing in New
 York on December 12. She probably left the AMICA cast in
 mid or late November).

1906/7

NEW YORK, Manhattan.

- DON GIOVANNI. Russ, Arta/Lejeune, Donalda, Bonci, Ancona/
 Renaud, Brag (Leporello), Gilibert, Mugnoz. Campanini.
 December 12, 15, 17. January 16.
 AIDA. Russ, De Cisneros, Bassi, Ancona/Sammarco, Arimondi,
 Mugnoz. Campanini. December 19, 25, 29, 31. January 12,
 26. February 9, 15. March 9. April 6, 9, 20.
 TROVATORE. Russ, De Cisneros/Bressler-Gianoli, Dalmorès,
 Seveilhac, Mugnoz. Tanara. January 1, 7, 19. February 16.
 March 23. April 19 (Act I).
 HUGUENOTS. Pinkert/Zeppilli, Russ (Valentine), De Cisneros,
 Bassi, Seveilhac, Ancona, Arimondi, Mugnoz. Campanini.
 January 18, 23. February 2, 13. April 13.
 CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA. Russ, Severina, Dalmorès/Venturini,
 Seveilhac. Campanini. February 1, 6, 11, 22. March 2, 16.
 BALLO. Russ, Zeppilli, De Cisneros, Bassi, Sammarco, Arimondi,
 Mugnoz. Campanini. February 27. March 2.
 FAUST. Russ, Zeppilli, Severina, Bassi, Sammarco, Arimondi.
 Campanini. March 22.
 VERDI REQUIEM. Russ, De Cisneros, Bassi, Arimondi. Campanini.
 March 29.

1907

SANTIAGO, Municipale.

- AIDA. Russ, Guerrini, Biel (t), Giraltoni (b). July.
 TROVATORE. Russ, Guerrini(?), Biel. from July 19.
 DAMNATION OF FAUST. Russ, Palet (t). from ?
 CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA. Russ, Schiavazzi (t). August.
 CRISTOFORO COLOMBO. Russ, Palet (t), Giraltoni. from August 25.
 ERNANI. Russ, Palet. from September 18.
 NORMA. Russ, Guerrini*, Biel. from October 2.

*(Virginia Guerrini sang Adalgisa to Teresa Arkel's Norma at La Scala in 1892 and Meg in the Scala premiere of Falstaff in 1893.)

THE RECORD COLLECTOR

VALPARAISO, Politeama.

- AIDA. Russ, Guerrini, Biel, Giraldoni, Masini, Pieralli. July 31.
 ERNANI. Russ, Biel, Giraldoni, Masini, Pieralli. October 8.
 NORMA. Russ, Guerrini, Biel, Nicoletti-Kormann. October 10.
 CRISTOFORO COLOMBO. Russ, Palet, Giraldoni, N-Kormann. October 11.
 DAMNATION OF FAUST. Russ, Palet, Giraldoni. October 21.

1907/8

NEW YORK, Manhattan.

- AIDA. Russ, De Cisneros, Zenatello/Bassi, Ancona, Arimondi, Mugnoz. Campanini. November 30, December 6, January 25, February 29, March 2 (Act II).
 ERNANI. Russ, Bassi, Ancona, Arimondi. Parelli. December 11.
 GIOCONDA. Russ, De Cisneros, Gerville-Réache (Giaconia after Act I), Zenatello, Ancona, Didur. Parelli. December 14.
 BALLO. Russ, Zeppilli/Trentini, De Cisneros/Bressler-Gianoli, Zenatello, Sammarco, Arimondi, Mugnoz. Campanini/Parelli. December 27, January 1, 6, 18.
 DON GIOVANNI. Russ, Jomelli, Zeppilli, Cazauran, Renaud, Didur, Gilibert, Mugnoz. Campanini. December 28, 30, January 10.
 CAV. RUSTICANA. Russ, Dalmorès, Crabbé. Campanini. December 31, January 4.
 TROVATORE. Russ, De Cisneros/S-Heink/G-Réache, Zenatello, Sammarco, Arimondi/Mugnoz. Parelli. January 11, 27. March 7.

1908

VIENNA, Hopofer

- DON GIOVANNI. Russ, Dora Domar, Cora Kampré, Bonci, Ancona, Bettoni, A. Pini-Corsi. May 21.

FLORENCE, Verdi

- NORMA. Russ, Garibaldi, Barrera, Montico. Lombardi. November 7, 8, 10, 12, 15, 19, 22.

1909

TURIN, Regio

- GIOCONDA. Russ/Giudice, Garibaldi, Piatracewska, Pintucci/Mannucci, Benedetti, Rossato. Serafin. 9pf. from January 1.
 NORMA. Russ, Garibaldi, Dygas/Assandria, Rossato. Serafin. 6pf. from February 21.
 HELLERA (Montemezzi). Russ (Hellera), Garbin (Adolfo), Benedetti (Doctor). Serafin. 3pf. from March 17. World premiere.

GENOA, Carlo Felice

- NORMA. Russ, Guerrini, Maurini, Contini. 6pf. from January 21.

PARMA, Regio

- NORMA. Russ, Garibaldi, Dygas, Ferroni. Barone. February 27, 28.

ROME, Costanzi.

- GIOCONDA. Russ, Elvira Salvatori/Garibaldi, Claessens, Palet, Ruffo. Masini Pieralli. Polacco. March 31, April 4, 7, 11.

ROME, Accademia di S. Cecilia.

- STABAT MATER. (Rossini). Russ, Pozzi, Soldini, Ricceri. April 9.

BERGAMO, Donizetti.

NORMA. Russ, Gramegna, Maurini, Contini, Gui. August.

MILAN, Dal Verme.

NORMA. Russ.

1909/10

NAPLES, San Carlo.

NORMA. Russ, Garibaldi, Dygas, Berardi. Campanini/Sormani.
December 22, 25, 26, 30. January 2, 4, 9, 15.

1910

ROME, Costanzi.

DON CARLO. Russ, Garibaldi, Bassi/Signorini, De Luca/Kaschmann,
Walter, Cirotto. Mascagni. January 29. February 1, 3, 5, 7,
10, 12. March 26, 28, 30.

NORMA. Russ, Garibaldi, Dygas, Walter. Mascagni/Teofilo de
Angelis. March 10, 12, 14, 16, 22, 31. April 3, 6, 10, 13.

ROME, Accademia di S. Cecilia.

GALLIA MOTET (Gounod) for soprano, chorus and orchestra.
February 18.

BUENOS AIRES, T. de la Opera. Conductor Mugnone.

OTELLO. Russ, Garavaglia, Zenatello, Stracciari, Venturini. from
May 25.

AIDA. Russ, Garibaldi, Zenatello, Nani, De Angelis. from June 4.

NORMA. Russ, Garibaldi, Dygas, De Angelis. from June 10.

AMICA. Russ, Garavaglia, Taccani, Stracciari. from July 21.

BALLO. Russ, Galli-Curci, Garibaldi, Dygas, Stracciari. from
August 7.

MONTEVIDEO, Solis.

BALLO. with above cast. August 25.

NORMA. Russ, Garibaldi, Dygas, De Angelis. August 28.

BARCELONA, Liceo.

VESTALE. Russ (Giulia), Zacconi, Vaccari (Licinio), De Marco,
Brondi, Paranesi. Mancinelli. 5(?)pf. from November 30.

NORMA. Russ, Zacconi (Adalgisa), Brondi (bs). from December 11.

TANNHÄUSER. Russ, Frau (Ortrud), Vignas, Segura-Tallien, Man-
suetto. from December 20.

JULIA.

1911

PALERMO, Massimo.

NORMA. Russ, Garibaldi, Dygas, Ricceri. from February 4.

ROME, Costanzi.

GUGLIELMO TELL. Russ, Figoriti, Fabbri, Zamco/Gilion, Battistini/
Kaschmann, Mansuetto. Mancinelli/Molinari. March 15, 23,
5, 31. April 6, 9, 11, 25.

GALA. incl. Act I NORMA w. Russ, Garibaldi, Ferrari-Fontana,
Brondi. April 17.

CATANIA, Massimo Bellini.

NORMA. Russ, Bavazzi, Palet, Cirino. May.

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1911/1912

MANTUA, Sociale.

NORMA. Russ, Supervia, Maurini, Brondi. E. Tango. December/
January.

1912

ST. PETERSBURG, Grand Theatre du Conservatoire.

TANNHÄUSER. Russ, Carasa (t), Battistini, Arimondi. January 25.

UGONOTTI. Russ, Boronat, Carasa. Arimondi. January 29.

BALLO. Russ, Carasa, Battistini, Arimondi. February 10.

1912/13

MILAN, Scala.

DON CARLO. Russ, Magliulo, De Muro, Galeffi, De Angelis,
Berardi. Serafin. 9pf. from October 26.

OBERON. Russ (Reiza), Bertalozzi (Oberon), Lollini (Fatima),
Armella (Titania), Cesa Bianchi (Huon), Paltrinieri, Tarughi,
Galli. Serafin. 7pf. from February 18.

NORMA. Russ, Garibaldi, Ferrari-Fontana, De Angelis. Serafin.
4pf. from March 23.

1913

PARMA, Regio. Conductor Campanini.

NABUCCO. Russ, Frascani (Fenena), Bellantoni (Nabucco), De
Angelis. September 10, 13.

BALLO. Russ, Teyte, Bergamasco, Bonci, Bione (Renato). September
14, 20.

AIDA. Russ, Frascani, Martinelli, Bellantoni, Mansueto. September 17.

DON CARLO. Russ, De Cisneros, Bassi, Danise, Masini Pieralli
(Philip II), Liani. October 5.

REQUIEM (Verdi). Russ, Frascani, Bonci, Arimondi. October 11.

GENOA, Politeama Genovese.

NORMA. Russ, Agozzini, Mario Balli, Pietro Frizzi. October.

ROME, Augusteo.

REQUIEM (Verdi). Russ, Guerrini, Bonci, De Angelis. Mascheroni.
November 21, 23, 26.

TURIN, Politeama Chiarella.

NORMA. Russ, Del Lungo, Colazza/Catullo Maestri. from Novem-
ber 30.

1914

PARMA, Reinach.

NORMA. Russ, Battaggi, Maestri, Contini. from February 19.

MILAN, Arena.

MORI DI VALENZA (Ponchielli). Russ, Passari, De Tura, Segura
Tallien (b), Molinari (bs). July 19.

BOLOGNA, Del Corso.

NORMA. Russ, Guerrini, Maestri, Masini, Pieralli. October.

ERNANI. Russ, Fazzini, Battistini, Masini Pieralli. December.

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1915

TURIN, Regio.

BALLO. Russ, Matteini, Di Angelo (Ulrica), Bonci, Ancona.
Panizza. 7pf. from January 12.

PAVIA, Frascini.

LORELEY. Russ, Enrichetta Menendez, Rotondi. from February 6.

VERONA, Filarmonico.

FAUST. Russ, Zinetti, Navia, Bonini, Quinzi-Tapergi. from March 4.

ROME, Quirino.

MOSÉ. Cast as at Bologna except Avedano for Belli. April 2.

GALA CONCERT. Russ, Battistini, Rossi, De Angelis. April 12.

FLORENCE, Verdi(?)

MOSÉ. Cast as at Bologna(?). May 2.

BOLOGNA, Communale.

MOSÉ. Russ (Anaide), Pieroni, Ponzano, Dolci (Amenofi), Facchini
(Elisero), Bettazzoni (Faraone), Belli (Osiride), Rossi, De
Angelis (Mosé). Mascagni. May 8, 9.

MILAN, Dal Verme

MOSÉ. Cast as at Bologna(?). May 13.

MILAN, Arena.

CONCERT. Russ and very large cast. July 26.

1915/16

FLORENCE, Politeama

NORMA. Russ, Guerrini, Maestri, Sabellico. Baroni. from December
31.

BATTAGLIA DI LEGNANO. Russ, Tommasini (t), Nani (b). Baroni.
from January 27.

1916

MILAN, Manzoni.

CONCERT. Russ, Garbin, Giraltoni, Bettoni. April 13.

VERONA, Nuovo.

NORMA. Russ, Guerrini, Carlo Albani, Donaggio. from June 3.

1917

MILAN, Dal Verme

CONCERTS. War victims. NORMA. Act I; Russ, Bettoni. February
21, 23.

ROME, Adriano.

GIOCONDA. Russ, M. de Angelis/Garibaldi/Besanzoni, Masini,
V. Borghese, Quinzi-Tapergi. May 17, 19, 20, 23, 27, 29.
June 3, 4, 6, 10.

1918

MILAN, Conservatorio.

STABAT MATER (Tarenghi). Russ, Frascani, Garrea. June.

ASTI, Aligheiri.

NORMA. Russ, Rina Gondi, Carlo Albani/Meehanan, Corbetta.
Francesco Spettrino. June.

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BERGAMO, Donizetti.

FORZA DEL DESTINO. Russ, De Rossi (ms), Dolci (t), Almodovar (b), Luppi (bs), Zoni. Panizza from August 24.

MILAN, Scala.

MOSÉ. Russ, Solari, Dolci/Fusati, Merli (Elisero), Ricci (Faraone), De Angelis (Mosé). Serafin. 13pf. from September 12.

FLORENCE, Pergola.

ERNANI. Russ, Righi-Briani (t), Viglione Borghese, Melicchi. Armani. from October 29.

1918/9

ROME, Costanzi.

DON CARLO. Russ, Sadun, Bassi, Galeffi, Cirino, Argentini. Marinuzzi/Teofilo de Angelis. December 21, 22, 25, 28. January 1, 3, 6, 12, 18, 24.

BALLO. Russ, Assunta Gargiulo, Gramegna/Maria Galeffi, Bonci, Almodovar. Bellezza. December 23, 26, 29. January 2, 5, 9.

1919

GENOA, Politeama Genovese.

LORELEY. Russ, Colombero, Barra (t), Faticanti, Barocchi. February 8, 9, 13, 15, 16, 23, 28. March 4.

NAPLES, San Carlo.

BALLO. Russ, Olga Perugino/Bice Citarella, Erminia Rubadi, Bonci, Franci, Mugnoz, Berenzone. Mascagni. March 15, 19, 23, 25, 27, 30.

BERGAMO, Donizetti.

ERNANI. Russ, Maestri, Noto, Donaggio. Gino Neri from April 26.

FABRIANO, Gentile.

BALLO. Russ, Perugino, Pezzati, Bonci, Trucchi-Dorini, Noto, Greco, Argentini. from June 16.

TURIN, Politeama Chiarella.

AFRICANA. Russ, Carlo Albani, Bellantoni, Melocchi from October 5.

NABUCCO. Russ, Giaconia, Caceffo (t), Bellantoni, Mansueto from November 1.

1920

ZURICH, State Theatre.

BALLO. Russ, Famadas (t), Battistini. June.

GIOCONDA. Russ, Orbellini (t), Almodovar. June.

MILAN, Arena.

NORMA. Russ, Capuana, Manarini, Balli, Algos, Ferroni. July 28, 29. August 11 Act I only, heavy rain ended performance.

1922

VICENZA, Eretenio

L'EBREO (Apolloni). Russ, Dolci, Molinari, Seri (bs). Vigna. May 16.

RIGOLETTO. Russ(?). May.

1923

MILAN, T. del Popolo.

CONCERT. Russ sang Fidelio aria. December 17.

1925

MILAN, T. del Popolo.

CONCERT. Russ, Salvi, Supervia. February 27.

Russ sang Selva opaca (Tell) and duet with Supervia (Norma).

Repertory

Our information relating to Russ's operatic activities is summarised below, using the following scheme:

1. The composers involved are listed alphabetically.
2. Under each composer the operas are also listed alphabetically.
3. For each opera the data is arranged in chronological order and usually requires two or more separate entries, occasionally only a single entry. Each entry consists of the year involved, followed by the name(s) of the place(s) in which Russ sang the opera during that particular year. For example she sang Bellini's 'Norma' in one city in 1908, in five cities in 1909 and in one city in 1909/10, the latter indicating a period from late 1909 to early 1910. * denotes a local premiere.

APOLLONI

EBREO. 1922 Vicenza.

BELLINI

NORMA. 1907 Santiago, Valparaíso. 1908 Florence. 1909 Genoa, Turin, Parma, Bergamo, Milan. 1909/10 Naples. 1910 Rome, Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Barcelona, 1911 Mantua, Palermo, Catania. 1912/13 Milan. 1913 Genoa, Turin. 1914 Parma, Bologna. 1915/16 Florence. 1916 Verona. 1918 Asti.

BERLIOZ

DANNAZIONE di FAUST. 1904 Ravenna. 1905 Buenos Aires, Montevideo. 1907 Santiago, Valparaíso.

CATALANI

LA WALLY. 1906 *Cairo, Alexandria.

LORELEY. 1915 Pavia. 1919 Genoa.

DONIZETTI

POLIUTO. 1904 Palermo.

FRANCHETTI

ASRAEL. 1906 Cairo, Alexandria.

CRISTOFORO COLOMBO. 1907 *Santiago, Valparaíso.

GOUNOD

FAUST. 1903/4 Lisbon. 1906/7 Manhattan. 1915 Verona.

MANCINELLI

FRANCESCA E PAOLO.

MASCAGNI

AMICA. 1905 *Buenos Aires, *Montevideo. 1906 *Milan. 1910 Buenos Aires.

CAV. RUSTICANA. 1906/7 Manhattan. 1907 Santiago. 1907/8 Manhattan.

MONTEMEZZI

HELLERA. 1909 Turin (World premiere).

MEYERBEER

AFRICANA. 1903 Milan. 1903/4 Lisbon. 1919 Turin.
UGONOTTI. 1906/7 Manhattan. 1912 St. Petersburg.

MOZART

DON GIOVANNI. 1906/7 Manhattan. 1907/8 Manhattan. 1908 Vienna.
NOZZE DI FIGARO. 1904/5 Milan.

PONCHIELLI

GIOCONDA. 1907/8 Manhattan. 1909 Turin, Rome. 1917 Rome. 1920 Zurich.
MORI DI VALENZA. 1914 Milan.

PUCCINI

BOHEME. 1903 Bologna (Mimi). 1904 Palermo (Musetta).
EDGAR. 1905 *Buenos Aires.

RACCANI

JULIA. 1901 Barcelona.

ROSSINI

SEMIRAMIDE. 1903/4 Lisbon.
GUGLIELMO TELL. 1911 Rome.
MOSÉ. 1915, Rome, Florence, Bologna, Milan. 1918 Milan.

SPONTINI

VESTALE. 1910 Barcelona.

VERDI

AIDA. 1904 Monte Carlo, London. 1904/5 Milan. 1905 Buenos Aires, Montevideo, 1905/6 Alexandria. 1906 Cairo, Athens. 1906/7 Manhattan. 1907 Santiago, Valparaiso. 1907/8 Manhattan. 1910 Buenos Aires. 1913 Parma.

BALLO IN MASCHERA. 1903 Bologna. 1903/4 Lisbon. 1904 London. 1905 Buenos Aires, Montevideo. 1906/7 Manhattan. 1907/8 Manhattan. 1910 Buenos Aires, Montevideo. 1912 St. Petersburg. 1913 Parma. 1915 Turin. 1918/19 Rome. 1919 Naples, Fabriano. 1920 Zurich.

BATTAGLIA DI LEGNANO. 1916 Florence.

DON CARLO. 1910 Rome. 1912/13 Milan, 1913 Parma. 1918/19 Rome.

ERNANI. 1903/4 Lisbon. 1904 Palermo. 1907 Santiago, Valparaiso. 1907/8 Manhattan. 1914 Bologna. 1918 Florence. 1919 Bergamo.

FORZA DEL DESTINO. 1904 Palermo. 1918 Bergamo.

NABUCCO. 1903/4 Lisbon. 1913 Parma. 1919 Turin.

OTELLO. 1910 Buenos Aires.

RIGOLETTO. 1905 Buenos Aires. (?) 1922 Vicenza.

TROVATORE. 1903 Milan. 1903/4 Lisbon. 1906/7 Manhattan. 1907 Santiago, Valparaiso. 1907/8 Manhattan.

VESPRI SICILIANI. 1903/4 Lisbon.

REQUIEM. 1906/7 Manhattan. 1913 Parma, Rome.

WAGNER

TANNHÄUSER. 1904/5 Milan. 1905/6 Alexandria. 1906 Cairo. 1910 Barcelona. 1912 St. Petersburg.

WEBER

OBERON. 1912/13 Milan.

Despite extensive researches there are sure to be gaps in the above table. Nevertheless it contains sufficient information to warrant drawing the following inferences:

1. Russ's repertory was overwhelmingly Italian, and
 2. her excursions into the French and German fields of opera were very limited.
 3. Verdi was her favourite composer.
 4. The operas she sang oftenest were 'Norma', 'Ballo' and 'Aida'.
-

Appendix I

The concert on Sunday 5 April 1903 at the Lirico was a benefit matinee in aid of the Cassa di Previdenza dei Giornalisti, a sort of benevolent fund. It consisted of a comedy, *Il Giornalissimo*, sandwiched between operatic arias. Besides partnering Russ in the 'Guarany' duet, Tamagno sang excerpts from Leoncavallo's 'I Medici', Ottorino Beltrami contributed the 'Pagliacci' prologue and a 'Don Sebastiano' aria and De Timroth sang 'L'altra notte' and 'Caro nome'. Tamagno also took part in the comedy with parodies of the worst singers imaginable. Tanara and Leoncavallo conducted. Russ and Tamagno also sang the duet from 'Guarany' in the following year at a concert in Florence, either in late April or early May. (Details from A. Bottazzi.)

Appendix II

The Italian sections of the biography and list of appearances in this article would have been far less well documented, and also less accurate, had it not been for the researches of Alberto Bottazzi. Among his sources were the following:

1. Reference books, e.g. *Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo*.
2. Operatic journals. Singers of the period were 'represented' by various agencies provided they had paid the subscription, and much information about their careers was published in the journals issued by the agencies. In the case of Russ the *Rivista teatrale melodrammatica* (journal of the Viviani agency) and *Rassegna melodrammatica* (journal of the Deliers agency) published detailed information about her appearances. Another journal, *Il Teatro*, was the mouthpiece of the Vallardi agency. These journals, still available in Italian libraries, are therefore very valuable; unfortunately they were either discontinued or seldom printed during World War I, which was an important period for Russ. They were not always 100% reliable, occasionally failing to mention an opera in which an artist sang or a change of cast or a cancellation. In one respect they were quite untrustworthy; the 'rave' reviews they often gave to singers on their books.
3. Newspapers: *Il Corriere della Sera* of Milan, *Il Resto del Carlino* of Bologna and *La Gazzetta* of Parma. All three newspapers made pre-season announcements about the scheduled programmes for various theatres, and the reviews in all three are trustworthy in the sense of not

being 'agency-inspired'. Il Corriere reviewed the first performance in a 'run', occasionally the second performance but rarely any other; cancellations and changes of cast were not usually noted. Il Resto had an exhaustive and detailed column called 'I Teatri' and, for Bologna theatres at least, its files provide near-complete information; for most performances there is a short review with the names of the cast while last-minute replacements and cancellations are always mentioned. For theatrical performances in Parma, La Gazzetta is almost as good as Il Resto for Bologna.

Appendix III

PATTI—TAMAGNO—RUSS CONCERT IN PARIS

Russ did not debut until 1903, Tamagno died in August 1905 so the participation of Russ and Tamagno in the concert would postulate a date in 1903, 1904 or 1905. In 'The Reign of Patti' Klein states that Patti sang in Paris in concerts at the Gaieté Theatre in April 1901 (p.354) and in April 1905 (p.362) but makes no reference to a visit by Patti to Paris between these dates. On the evidence of Klein, then, April 1905 is a possible date for the concert as far as Patti is concerned; but whether Russ and Tamagno were in Paris at that time is not known. In any case a date in April 1905 is somewhat doubtful as Tamagno became ill with angina in the spring of that year (Le Grandi Voci, p.834). However, a letter dated 8 October 1903 written by Michaelis, the Gramophone Company's agent in Italy at the time, contains the following news: 'Tamagno is going to sing for us next week ... the famous duet from Guarany which he sang in Paris in the Spring with Giannina Russ.' So a date in the spring of 1903 becomes possible for the concert, although as yet we have no evidence showing that Patti was in Paris at the time (see also Discography Appendix).

Appendix IV

The Teatro de la Opera and other theatres of Buenos Aires (Information from Eduardo Arnosi, a native of the city).

The first important opera house in Buenos Aires was the Teatro Colón which opened in 1857 with Tamberlick in Traviata and closed in 1888 with Tamagno in Otello. In the meantime the Teatro de la Opera had opened in 1872 and was rated second in importance to the Colón until the latter closed. Then the Teatro de la Opera took its place as the leading opera house in Buenos Aires and South America and was the scene of many splendid opera seasons in the period 1889 to 1911. The Buenos Aires' premieres of Tristan, Walküre and Götterdämmerung and also of several Puccini operas took place there. However with the opening of the splendid new Colón theatre in 1908 the Teatro de la Opera reverted to second place. Its last important season was in 1911 when the Opéra-Comique of Paris with Albert Wolff visited the theatre and produced Pelléas (S. A. premiere). Subsequently only the Teatro Coliseo, which opened in 1906 and produced opera (though not exclusively) from 1907 until its activities ceased in the mid-twenties, could be considered a possible rival to the Colón.

Appendix V(An excerpt from *La Vocalita di 'Norma'* by R. Celletti)

In the general problem arising from the vocal demands made by Bellini in 'Norma', the difficulties facing the protagonist are specially notable. As is known Norma is one of the prototypes of the so-called *soprano drammatico di agilità*, a vocal type introduced by Bellini, Donizetti and their contemporaries which survived until the time of Verdi's 'Trovatore' and included the Leonora of that opera. The term '*soprano drammatico di agilità*' implies that the singing follows two divergent directions; on the one hand a vocalism which is taut, vigorous, 'spianato' — that is, syllabic and free from fioriture and vocalised passages — and maybe here and there carried to harsh declamatory emotion; on the other hand an 'ornate' vocalism rich in passages of agility and, in short, basically virtuosistic.

Technically the two directions are opposed to one another, as the 'spianato' singing presupposes a type of foundation and search for effects which ill accord with the foundation required for virtuosic singing. In practice, however, the *soprani drammatici di agilità* of the first half of the nineteenth century—like those of later epochs—were able in various cases to overcome the ambiguous formula launched by the romantic composers and transmute it into an element of success. In the case of 'Norma', however, further difficulties in the writing, in addition to the extremely demanding interpretative problems, have caused the role to be regarded always as one of the most awe-inspiring and exhausting in the entire nineteenth century dramatic repertory.

As frequently happens when a part is written for a particular singer, these difficulties have their origin in the remarkable, or rather the abnormal vocal characteristics of the first interpreter. In the early part of her career Giuditta Pasta had become famous as a Rossinian contralto, which in effect means a virtuosic contralto of agility. However, starting in 1826 her first contacts with romantic opera—in particular Pacini's 'Niobe'—had gradually set her on the way towards the soprano range, so much so that in the famous 1830/31 season at the Carcano Theatre in Milan she had emerged as the protagonist in 'Anna Bolena' and in 'La Sonnambula', two very high parts written for her by Donizetti and Bellini for that occasion.

Nevertheless after changing from contralto to soprano, Pasta retained a remarkably full and vigorous central register of which Bellini did not fail to take account at times. From this arises one of Norma's vocal difficulties. If the prayer 'Casta diva' introduces passages which are rather high even when sung in F major, the key normally used—Bellini had originally written it in G but Pasta with good reason found this tessitura too high—and if the succeeding Allegro 'Ah, bello a me ritorna' contains acrobatic passages which are developed in the very highest register, nevertheless other pages ask for Norma's voice to be expanded in the central, and even in the low, zone of the stave. This happens in the Trio of Act I 'Oh non tremare, o perfido.' In Act II the long and dramatic opening recitative 'Dormano entrambi' is mainly central. Norma returns to a very high tessitura, at least from time to time, in the duet with Adalgisa, 'Mira o Norma', but in the duet with Pollione 'In mia mano alfin tu sei' the zone of her singing, especially in the initial section, often coincides with the radius of action of a mezzo-soprano. And the Largo 'Qual cor tradisti', apart from an uncovered high B

natural, is also rather low in tessitura as is the Moderato 'Deh! non volerli vittime' for the most part, except for sudden high outbursts.

In substance, as was stated earlier, Norma is a high or 'sfogato' soprano in excerpts of an ecstatic ('Casta diva' and the duets with Adalgisa) or brilliant nature (the Allegro 'Ah, bello a me ritorna) which allow a languid fioritura and a type of vocal agility formerly called 'di maniera' (that is, 'di grazia'). On the other hand Norma is a central soprano with diversions into the mezzo-soprano zone—except for outbursts which carry her up to high C—in

- (1) passages of 'spianato' singing and of dramatic content; or else in those
- (2) passages where her indignation breaks out in aggressive vehement declamation (agility 'di bravura' or 'di forza') as in 'Oh, non tremare o perfido', 'I romani a cento a cento' and 'Adalgisa fia punita'.

In the last of these excerpts the first two bars contains three trills to be sung 'con furore' on notes lying in the middle and low parts of the stave: an effect which can be rendered completely only by a voice which possesses a very large compass in the lower octave.

To this panorama of purely vocal difficulties must be added, for Norma, difficulties of an expressive and interpretative kind; the necessity for great ability in varying the tone and the possession of a vast range of light and shade to convey the different psychological moments of the character and the transitions from affectionate and elegiac singing to excited and declamatory utterance. In addition a considerable force of accent is required—even in the recitatives—bearing in mind among other things that some vocal-psychological attributes of Norma are compatible with her portrayal as a neo-classical tragic heroine, a scheme which can be expressed in broad, majestic and, under some aspects, even magniloquent terms.

The above, translated by J.B.R., is part of Rodolfo Celletti's article entitled *La Vocalità di 'Norma'*, which was published in 1974 on pages 155-159 of *NORMA*, No:5 in the series of Musical Guides issued by the Regio Theatre of Turin.

Appendix VI

Galli-Curci and Buenos Aires

REFERENCE BOOKS:

- El Teatro Colón, 1908-1958 ed. Matera. Bs Aires 1958.
 Historia del Teatro Colón, 1908-1968, Caamaño. Bs. Aires 1969.
 Life of Song, Le Massema. New York 1945.

Page 15 of Matera carries three photographs, including one of Galli-Curci, and gives brief details of the 1910 Colón season. In the preamble it is stated that several great artists 'at the height of their fame' sang for the first time at the Colón that season; among them Mazzoleni, ... Galli-Curci, Anselmi, ... etc. Well, Galli-Curci did sing at the Colón in 1910, as reference to Caamaño confirms, but it was for a single performance only on 30th July as Musetta in 'Bohème' with Agostinelli, Anselmi, De Luca and Didur. On that occasion she was a substitute loaned by the Teatro de la Opera Compañy, yet the performance must rank as her Colón debut. Massena doesn't mention it. Galli had made her first stage appearance some three and a half years earlier, singing Gilda at Trani on 26th December 1906.

After that she had sung a number of other important roles, including Violetta in various theatres in Italy and Egypt. So when she was engaged for a tour of South America in 1910, mainly at the T. de la Opera in Buenos Aires, she expected to be given a number of leading roles. To her intense disappointment she found on arrival that Esperanza Clasenti had a contract to sing them and that she herself had been assigned supporting roles only. Nevertheless her chance came when she substituted for the indisposed Clasenti in 'Rigoletto' and scored a definite success (Massena, p.65). Later at Montevideo with Clasenti still unwell, Galli was called on to sing not only Gilda but also Rosina and Nedda.

Galli returned to South America in 1912 and sang at the Teatro Coliseo in Buenos Aires. Her third visit to the city, in 1915, involved a full season at the Colón where she appeared twice with Caruso in 'Lucia'. By then she was becoming famous although it was not until her appearance in Chicago in late 1916 and in New York in early 1918 that she received the frenzied ovations that marked her international fame. So the suggestion in Matera that she had already reached the pinnacle in 1910 is several years too early.

Appendix VII

SUPERVIA AND ADALGISA

A biographical sketch and discography of Conchita Supervia was published in the Record Collector in March 1951 (Vol. VI, No. 3). Two years later in the February 1953 issue (Vol. VIII, No. 2) on page 43 under the heading 'additions to the list of her roles' appeared the following:

Norma (Bellini) Adalgisa to the Norma of
Giannina Russ (inf. supplied by Madame
Supervia, the singer's mother).

Very recently (January 1982) confirmation that Russ and Supervia did sing together in 'Norma' has been provided by Giorgio Gualerzi of Turin. The performances took place in the Teatro Sociale of Mantua in the 1911/12 season, probably in late December and/or early January; and besides Russ and Supervia the cast included the tenor Attilio Maurini and the bass Alfredo Brondi under the conductor Egisto Tango.*

We also have evidence that Supervia sang Adalgisa in some performances of 'Norma' at the Teatro Verdi of Florence beginning on 10th December 1919, with Ester Mazzoleni as Norma and Catullo Maestri as Pollione under the direction of Bellezza. These details, from the files of the Florence daily *La Nazione*, were sent to me (J.B.R.) several years ago by the National Central Library of Florence during the researches on Pinza's repertory. Asked if Pinza sang Oroveso in the 1919 performances of 'Norma' at the Teatro Verdi, the Library was unable to say as neither the announcements nor the review in *La Nazione* made any reference to the singer involved. Charles Jahant, a mine of information, has since reported that the Oroveso in question was Luigi Rossi.

*Tom Kaufman of New Jersey has confirmed (March 1982) the details of the 'Norma' performances at Mantua, stating that they commenced on 30th December and were part of the 1911-12 Carnevale Season.

Reverting to Supervia: presumably she made other appearances as Adalgisa besides those mentioned above. One wonders whether she sang the music as written by Bellini or whether she resorted to transpositions or other devices. It would be very interesting to know. For Adalgisa's music contains three high C's in passages of agility, several high B flats and a considerable number of high A's and A flats.

Appendix VIII

REVIEW OF 'NORMA', TURIN 1909

When Russ arrived in Turin in February 1909 to sing in 'Norma' shortly after her success in the same opera in Genoa, the Turin reviewer pointed out that she came with the reputation of being one of the best contemporary exponents of the role. Nevertheless he wondered if she could sustain comparison with famous interpreters of the past and be considered one of the truly great Normas. He then went on to say:

After listening to the magnificent recitative 'di sortita' which precedes the cavatina 'Casta diva', we doubted it. Her voice seemed to lack the necessary amplitude; the nobility of dramatic expression was not revealed to us with that superb beauty of accent and colour that we would have wished. But the artistry with which Russ sang the aria 'Casta diva' shook us and it was so throughout the evening. Moments of apathy on our part alternated with others of sincere admiration for the skilfulness of the phrasing, for the expression, for the noble stage bearing, for the correctness and the delicacy of certain contrasts of colour. Above all — something now almost unheard of among interpreters of these old masterpieces in which every licence seems to be allowed for the purpose of extorting cheap applause from the crowd — she showed a respect for the rhythm and a sense of moderation in the search for effects which few other artists could boast today, even in the performance of modern operas.

So to us Russ's artistry seemed to be permeated more with finesse than with warmth; more studied than arising naturally from the springs of feeling; capable of revealing itself much better in the tranquil flow of the melody than in the outbursts and fiery beauty of certain recitatives almost declamatory in nature.

But even if Russ does not succeed in arousing frequently those moments of emotion which sweep through an audience like the wind through crops, she reveals at any rate such a sense of artistry — even if incomplete in its manifestations — as to merit an honourable place among those interpreters of Norma, who while *remaining less than truly great,* nevertheless deserve praise for the quality of their singing and the vivacity of their genius.

The above review appeared in Turin's leading newspaper, La Stampa. Translation by J.B.R.

THE RECORD COLLECTOR

GRAMOPHONE COMPANY — OCTOBER 1903 — MILAN

The 10" and 12" series were recorded by Will Gaisberg in Milan, they form two separate series but were not successive although recorded during the same month.

10" (25cm)

1. CON. 147 Manon Lescaut (Puccini) In quelle trine
53342 Zono. X-93049
2. CON. 149 Fedora (Giordano) O degli occhi
unpublished
3. CON. 228 Mefistofele (Boito) Serenata — with Longhi, Ventura
54046
4. CON. 250 Aida (Verdi) Duet — with Longhi
unpublished
5. CON. 254 Boheme (Puccini) Addio senza rancor
unpublished

12" (30cm)

6. CON. 535 Nozze (Mozart) Voi che sapete
053008
7. CON. 540 Aida (Verdi) Duetto finale (Aida-Amneris) — with Longhi
054040
8. CON. 541 Traviata (Verdi) Prendi quest'è — with Ventura, Bal-
dassare
054006
9. CON. 543 Traviata (Verdi) Parigi o cara — with Ventura
054008
10. CON. 600 Rigoletto (Verdi) Quartetto — with Longhi, Ventura,
Bucalo
054015
11. CON. 601 Boheme (Puccini) Quartetto finale — with Longhi, Ventura,
Bucalo
054016
12. CON. 609 Lucia (Donizetti) Chi mi frena — with Tisci-Rubini,
Ventura, Bucalo
054019
13. CON. 615 Gioconda (Ponchielli) Finale Act 4 — with Bucalo
054021
14. CON. 618 Boheme (Puccini) O soave fanciulla — with Ventura
054029
15. CON. 620 Guarany (Gomez) Duetto — with Tamagno
unpublished
16. CON. 621 Aida (Verdi) Ebben qual nuovo — with Longhi
054022
17. CON. 624 Forza (Verdi) Piu tranquilla — with Tisci-Rubini
054024
18. CON. 627 Boheme (Puccini) Mi chiamano
053025
19. CON. 630 Traviata (Verdi) Un di felice — with Ventura
054030

20. CON. 633 Gioconda (Ponchielli) Finale Act 1 — with Longhi
054032
21. CON. 635 Mefistofele (Boito) Lontano Lontano — with Ventura
054023
22. CON. 636 Mefistofele (Boito) Amore misterioso — with Ventura
054025

Appendix

RUSS AND TAMAGNO IN THE 'GUARANY' DUET

The Italian newspaper 'La Lombardia' for 22nd October 1903 reported that a gramophone concert the previous day at which Massenet was present, included the duet from 'Guarany'. According to a letter dated 8th October 1903, Michaelis, who was an important figure and the Gramophone Company's agent in Italy at that time, stated that 'Tamagno is going to sing next week for us the 12th (or possibly 12") record he is owing us. He will sing the famous duet from "Guarany" which he has sung in Paris in the Spring with Giannina Russ, who is singing for us too.'

The matrix given to the disc was 620 (CON) and there is no information of the date that it was finally destroyed, it was said to be very bad and was destroyed on Tamagno's orders. The fact that it got as far as having a matrix number possibly gives a glimmer of hope that some test pressings were made but after nearly eighty years nobody has ever reported seeing or hearing of one, there was a report at that time that samples were made for a demonstration and then the master destroyed. The CON part of the matrix has been finally solved in that it stands for William CONrad Gaisberg, and this also cracks the RAD puzzle being the second half of William Gaisberg's middle name.

Fonotopia October 1904

General Note on the Fonotipias

Until recently, most collectors assumed that Fonotipia recorded at three main centres, Milan, Paris and Berlin, and Russ being she was Italian based suggested that her recordings would have been done at Milan. Recent research has clearly shown that many Fonotipias thought to have been recorded in Milan were actually recorded in London due to the tie-up with Odeon. This appears to have happened in Bonci's case so the origin of the Russ Fonotipias although probably Milan still remains in some doubt.

- | | | | |
|-----|--------|----|---|
| 23. | XXXXPH | 16 | Trovatore (Verdi) Non m'inganno with G. Pacini, Longobardi
69004 |
| 24. | XXXXPH | 20 | Ballo (Verdi) Terzetto — with G. Pacini, Longobardi
69003 |
| 25. | XPH | 21 | Trovatore (Verdi) Duet — with Longobardi
unpublished |
| 26. | XPH | 22 | Ernani (Verdi) ? — with Longobardi, G. Pacini
unpublished |
| 27. | XPH | 27 | Aida (Verdi) — with G. Pacini
unpublished |

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- | | | | |
|-----|-----|-----------------|--|
| 28. | XPH | 28 | Gioconda (Ponchielli) Duet — with G. Pacini
39063 |
| 29. | XPH | 36 | Ave Maria (Bach—Gounod)
39046 |
| 30. | XPH | 37 | Il labro santo (Pinsuti)
39056 |
| 31. | XPH | 38 ² | Leggenda volacca (Braga)
39049 |
| 32. | XPH | 40 | Forza (Verdi) Venite fidente—with Luppi
39064 |
| 33. | XPH | 41 | Forza (Verdi) E l'amante?—with Luppi
39055 |
| 34. | XPH | 43 | Nozze (Mozart) Voi che sapete
39047 |
| 35. | XPH | 44 | Forza (Verdi) La vergine—(with chorus)
39031 |

Fonotipia October 1905

- | | | | |
|-----|-----|------|---|
| 36. | XPH | 364 | Forza: (Verdi) ?
unpublished |
| 37. | XPH | 365 | Manon Lescaut (Puccini) In quelle trine
39481 |
| 38. | XPH | 368 | Faust: (Gounod) All'erta—with Bonci, Luppi
39299 |
| 39. | XPH | 371 | Forza: (Verdi) ?—with Luppi
unpublished |
| 40. | XPH | 372 | Forza: (Verdi) ?—with Luppi
unpublished |
| 41. | XPH | 373 | Boheme (Puccini) Si mi chiamano
39308 |
| 42. | XPH | 400A | Aida: (Verdi) Ritorna Vincitor
39354 P.O. 108 |
| 43. | XPH | 400H | Aida: (Verdi) I sacri nomi
39355 P.O. 108 |
| 44. | XPH | 401 | L'Africana (Meyerbeer) Figlio del sol
39357 |

Fonotipia November 1905

- | | | | |
|-----|------|-----|--|
| 45. | XPH | 415 | Ballo: (Verdi) ?—with M. Coletti, Corradetti
unpublished |
| 46. | XXPH | 418 | Gioconda: (Ponchielli) Angele Dei—with Parsi-Pettinella
74001 |
| 47. | XPH | 454 | Traviata: (Verdi) Prendi quest'è—with Ventura, Corradetti
39380 |
| 48. | XPH | 455 | Aida: (Verdi) ?—with M. Coletti
unpublished |
| 49. | XXPH | 456 | Aida: (Verdi) Su dunque—with M. Coletti
74003 |

THE RECORD COLLECTOR

- | | | | |
|-----|------|-----|--|
| 50. | XPH | 460 | Trovatore: (Verdi) ?—with M. Coletti
unpublished |
| 51. | XPH | 461 | Trovatore: (Verdi) ?—with M. Coletti
unpublished |
| 52. | XXPH | 462 | Gioconda: (Ponchielli) Figlia che reggi—with M. Coletti, Parsi-Pettinella
74004 |
| 53. | XPH | 474 | Rigoletto: (Verdi) Figlia! mio padre—with M. Coletti
39398 |
| 54. | XPH | 475 | Rigoletto: (Verdi) Ah veglia o donna—with M. Coletti
39399 |
| 55. | XPH | 476 | Amica: (Mascagni) Più presso
39388 |
| 56. | XPH | 477 | Gioconda: (Ponchielli) Così mantieni—with Blanchard
39535 |
| 57. | XPH | 486 | Lucia: (Donizetti) ?—with M. Coletti, Sala, Luppi, Palet
unpublished |

NOTES: (1) Most of the gaps in the matrix series are used up by other artists but three remain which are not accounted for viz. XXPH 18 and 19 and XPH 29. The first two relate to 13¾" (35cm) recordings of the first Fonotipia sessions of October 1904 and the artists involved from XXPH (or XPH) 16–28 were Russ, Giuseppe Pacini and Luigi Longobardi. XPH 29 could either be a continuation or possibly Barrientos as the following two matrices XPH 30 and 31 belong to her.

(2) A number of the early recordings were later recorded in 1906 and two editions appear on the same catalogue number, e.g. Fono. 39031 would have either XPH 44 (1904) or XPH 2127² (1906). The reason for the second editions has never been completely explained. A possibility is the fact that many of the earliest recordings were recorded at fast speeds of 84 rpm.–86 rpm. The later recordings tended to be more uniform at 76 rpm.–78 rpm.

(3) In a number of cases there are second editions in the 1906–14 series, they clearly show a small figure² after the matrix number, rather than make individual entries for these second editions, they are shown in the main discography with a figure 2 after the matrix number. Where the figure 2 is shown, these are cases which have been checked as being issued, though there could be others, in fact there is one reported case of a third edition (39046) and here a figure 3 is used after the matrix number.

(4) The system generally accepted regarding matrix numbers related to size is—XPH = 10¾", XXPH = 12", XXXPH = 13¾". However, Fonotipia were not always careful as in the case of three 13¾" discs in the authors collection, one has the correct XXXPH, another has XXPH and the third PHXX.

THE RECORD COLLECTOR

Fonotopia July 1906

58. XXPH 1981² Aida (Verdi)—Rivedrai le foreste—with M. Coletti
74002

Fonotopia August 1906

59. XPH 2065² Ave Maria (Gounod)
39046
60. XPH 2066 Il libro santo (Pinsuti)
39056
61. XPH 2067² Leggenda volacca (Braga)
39049

Fonotopia September 1906

62. XXPH 2089 Lucia (Donizetti) Chi mi frena—with Martinez-Patti, Sala, Bonini, Luppi
74017
63. XPH 2094 Traviata (Verdi) Madamigella Valery ? — with Bonini
39869
64. XPH 2095² Traviata (Verdi) Pura siccome—with Bonini
39870
65. XPH 2096 Traviata (Verdi) E grave il sacrificio—with Bonini
39871

Fonotopia October 1906

66. XPH 2114 Traviata (Verdi) Dite alla giovine—with Bonini
39872
67. XPH 2115 Guarany (Gomez) Senta una forza—with Martinez-Patti
39797
68. XPH 2116 Il suon dell' arpe—with Bonini
unpublished
69. XPH 2117 Traviata (Verdi) Imponete—with Bonini
39873
70. XPH 2127² Forza (Verdi) La vergine—with chorus
39031

Fonotopia November 1906

71. XPH 2209² Norma (Bellini) Casta diva
39892
72. XXPH 2211 Tannhäuser (Wagner) Rivedrò alfin—with Corradetti
74027

Fonotopia 1908

73. XPH 3345 Cav. Rusticana (Mascagni) Voi lo sapete
92228

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- 74. XPH 3347 Mefistofele (Boito) Spunta l'aurora
92236
- 75. XPH 3348² Boheme (Puccini) Donde lieta
92230
- 76. XPH 3351 Traviata (Verdi) Addio del passato
92237
- 71. XPH 3352 Tannhäuser (Wagner) Salve d'amor
92235
- 78. XPH 3355 Manon Lescaut (Puccini) In quelle trine
92231
- 79. XPH 3357 Trovatore (Verdi) Tacea la notte
92232
- 80. XXPH 3359 Boheme (Puccini) Si mi chiamano
74111
- 81. XPH 3360 Fedora (Giordano) O grandi occhi
92954
- 82. XPH 3361 Ernani (Verdi) Ernani involami
92233
- 83. XPH 3363 Lohengrin (Wagner) Aurette a cui
92234
- 84. XPH 3370 Siberia (Leoncavallo) Nel suo amore
92229

Fonotipia 1909

- 85. XPH 3499 Fedora (Giordano) Vedi io piango—with Garbin
92268
- 86. XPH 3500 Fedora (Giordano) Addio a domani—with Garbin
92269
- 87. XPH 3501 Fedora (Giordano) Morte di Fedora
92955
- 88. XPH 3509 Carmen (Bizet) Ah mi parla—with Garbin
92270
- 89. XPH 3510 Carmen (Bizet) Ti baciava—with Garbin
92271
- 90. XPH 3511 Aida (Verdi) O cieli azzurri
92273
- 91. XPH 3517 Madama Butterfly (Puccini) Ancor un passo
92272

Fonotipia 1910

- 92. XXPH 3898 Cav. Rusticana (Mascagni) Ad essi—with Amato
74141

Fonotipia 1910-14

- 93. XPH 4225 La Wally (Catalani) Sei tu che—with Viglione-Borghese
92843
- 94. XPH 4226² La Wally (Catalani) L'Hagenbach qui—with Viglione-Borghese
92844

THE RECORD COLLECTOR

- | | | |
|------|-----------------------|--|
| 95. | XPH 4395 | Don Carlos (Verdi) Tu che le vanità.
92747 |
| 96. | XPH 4396 | Don Carlos (Verdi) Fra voi vaghi giardin
92748 |
| 97. | XPH 4397 | La Wally (Catalani) Nè mai dunque
92749 |
| 98. | XPH 4398 ² | Via!... (Montanari)
92750 |
| 99. | XPH 4946 | Norma (Bellini) Deh con te—with Guerrini
69062 |
| 100. | XPH 4947 | Norma (Bellini) Mira o Norma—with Guerrini
69063 |
| 101. | XPH 4948 | Norma (Bellini) Cedi deh cedi—with Guerrini
69064 |
| 102. | XPH 4949 | Norma (Bellini) Solo furtiva—with Guerrini
69065 |
| 103. | XPH 4950 | Norma (Bellini) Ah si fa core—with Guerrini
69066 |
| 104. | XPH 4955 | Norma (Bellini) Ah bello a me ritorna
69061 |
| 105. | XPH 5036 ² | Nabucco (Verdi) Donna chi sei—with Nani
69172 |
| 106. | XPH 5037 | Nabucco (Verdi) Oh di qual'onta—with Nani
69173 |
| 107. | XPH 5038 | Nabucco (Verdi) Deh perdona—with Nani
69174 |
-
- | | | |
|------|------------------|--|
| | Fonotipia | probably 1910-14 (no matrix numbers) |
| 108. | XXPH | Gioconda (Ponchielli) Suicidio
74112 |
| 109. | XPH | Semiramide (Rossini) Bel raggio
69075 |
| 110. | XPH | Semiramide (Rossini) Ah qui verrà
69076 |
| 111. | XPH | Tristan & Isolde (Wagner) Morte di Isotta (Pt. 1)
69077 |
| 112. | XPH | Tristan & Isolde (Wagner) Morte di Isotta (Pt. 2)
69078 |
| 113. | XPH | Lohengrin (Wagner) Sola nei miei
69079 |
| 114. | XPH | Lohengrin (Wagner) Quel cavalier
69080 |
| 115. | XPH | William Tell (Rossini) Selva opaca
69081 |
| 116. | XPH | L'Ebreja (Halevy) Ei deve venir
69082 |

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Russ on Microgroove

In addition to the four main issues, numerous LP's exist which contain examples of Russ—they mainly form highlights of various operas or general selections which include other singers as well. A number of these re-issues are listed with indications whenever possible showing which recording was used, in isolated cases where more than one take was issued on the same catalogue number both are indicated i.e. 'La vergine' (Forza) 35 or 70.

This list does not pretend to be complete as many re-issues have appeared in different parts of the world which never reached universal distribution and what might have been issued in Spain or Italy would not be available in Britain or America and vice versa. The listing which follows gives an idea of some of the more popular re-issues but alas even a number of these have been deleted from the catalogues for many years.

RUBINI. GV 58	37 42 43 44 55 63 64 65 66 73 74 76 80 84
PREISER C.O.381	35 or 70 37 42 43 44 71 80 90 100 102 104 111 112
SCALA S.C.808	35 or 70 71 74 76 81 87 95 96
(Backed by a RAISA recital)	
BELCANTO B.C.239	42 43 49 58 99 100 101
(Backed by a BURZIO recital)	
HERITAGE X1G 8016	'Highlights of Gioconda' 46 52 108
HERITAGE X1G 8014	'Highlights of Rigoletto' 53 54
HERITAGE X1G 8012	'Highlights of Norma' 99 100 101 102
	103
HERITAGE X1G 8008	'Highlights of Aida' 49 58
BONGIOVANI. GB 1026	'Mascagni Rarities' 56
TAP. T 321	'20 Great Duets' 99
PREISER. LV 283	'Recital by Viglione-Borghese' 94
BELCANTO. AJK 104	'Collectors Choice' 84
<i>45 rpm</i>	
Belcanto EB61	'L' Africana Highlights' 44
Belcanto EB71	'Duets' with Magini-Coletti 58 49
Belcanto EB73	'Aida' Highlights 42 43
Belcanto EB94	'Gioconda' Highlights 52
Belcanto EB76	'Recital' 74 76 75 78

Discussion on the Recordings

The recordings of Giannina Russ have always fascinated collectors, the voice that emerges is a well schooled, mellow instrument of even quality and although many of her recordings do not particularly flatter the voice, enough comes through to confirm that Russ fully justified her world rating. In contrast to her famous rival Boninsegna whose recordings are superb but whose career centred on many of the smaller opera houses, Russ held an enviable world reputation at the world leading opera houses but her recordings although reasonable in sound lack the verve and sparkle of Boninsegna's.

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The best of her recordings illustrate the good qualities of the voice but quite a number suggest that the singer was placed too distantly from the recording horn with a resultant lack of clarity. Good examples of the singer's art include the excerpts from 'Norma' where the voice is revealed as a fine dramatic soprano which is allied to an excellent sense of style. The duets with the powerful voiced Guerrini have always held a justifiably high place in collectors affections and are a direct link with the sensational success that the two singers experienced in Italy in this opera. The excerpts from 'Nabucco' again reveal the same qualities and even if her partner the baritone Enrico Nani is not always as steady as desired, they do combine to make this series memorable.

Possibly the most common of the 78's is the 1930's Parlophone-Historic re-issue of 'Ritorna vincitor' and 'I sacri nomi'. Happily, it is also one of the most forwardly recorded of the series and arguably is the best example of the soprano's voice. The singing is heavenly and the richness of the voice is very much in evidence. Another jewel of this period is the 'Faust' trio where Russ is joined by Bonci and Luppi, the balance, even in this very early recording, is excellent and the soaring soprano line holds no terrors for her and places it in direct competition with the famous Farrar, Caruso, Journet version on Victor/HMV. Most of Russ's Verdi recordings are of a very high standard and yet another 'series' of duets are those from the second act of 'La Traviata' where her partner is the magnificent baritone Bonini. The sheer drama of this scene has seldom been bettered by purely vocal means and when two singers of this quality get together it would take a bold speculator to suggest a superior version.

Russ belonged to the verismo period but fortunately her technique saved her from the worst extravagances of this era and what we can hear on the best of her recordings is the rich mellow sounds of a voice which was trained to the highest standards of what we now regard as 'bel canto'. The early G&T's are interesting and contain many unusual selections with the unpublished duet with Tamagno perhaps one to savour our appetites, but the voice is better captured on the Fonotipias and they certainly confirm her position as one of the world's leading sopranos and examples of her singing are worth a place in any collection of great singing.

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- ITALY: Alberto Bottazzi, Rodolfo Celletti, Giorgio Gualerzi,
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Director: National Central Library, Florence.
Director: Public Library, Parma.
- ARGENTINA: Edoardo Arnosi.
- BRAZIL: Moises Miguel.
- CANADA: Jim Stratton.
- USA: W. Collins, Tom Kaufman, Lim M. Lai, W.R. Moran,
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Collection)
-

What Zenatello thought of His Records

by Jim Walsh

The recent article giving the life story of Giovanni Zenatello and discussing his records was so interesting that I hope it is not too late to contribute a brief supplement.

A few days ago I was reading a bound volume of *Diamond Points*, the 'house organ' which Thomas A. Edison, Inc., published to stimulate dealers to greater sales exertions. In the October, 1916, issue was an article entitled 'The Zeal of Zenatello'. It turned out to be an interview with the tenor, in which he is quoted as saying that only Edison records reproduced his voice as it actually was. Zenatello's Fonotipia records have been praised, but, judging by this interview, he thought little of them.

I realize that the article is suspect because it appeared in a trade publication with an axe to grind—that of keeping Edison dealers convinced that the Diamond Discs were superior to all competing records—but I do not believe the magazine would have dared to misrepresent what Zenatello said. I shall copy part of the interview, leaving out 'background material', such as date of birth, operatic career, and the like, which are already familiar:

'*Signor* I am surprised, I am astounded—I am—how you say it?—I am overcome when I hear Zenatello on the Edison. I don't believe it at first. Then I cry, 'It is Zenatello! It is Zenatello!'

'I hear myself on talking machines, *signor*. I sing for talking machines in Milan and New York, but, and here the tenor made a little grimace, 'but I do not hear Zenatello on talking machines.

'Mr Edison is the only one who—what you say?—Re-Creates my voice. On the Edison I sing like I sing at home or on the stage. I sing like Zenatello always sings. There is nothing complicated about the Edison. You sing yourself and the Edison sings and you cannot tell the difference, *signor*.

'My favorite role, *signor*?' Smiles eddied in the tenor's blue eyes.

'*Otello! Otello, signor!* All over the world I have sung *Otello*. I sing *Otello* at La Scala, at Buenos Aires, in New York and all over your country. It is my favorite. I sing *Otello* for the Edison like I sing *Otello* on the stage. My wife is in the next room, and she thinks the Edison is Zenatello and my friends think the Edison is Zenatello. And I cannot tell the difference,

signor. I don't know if I am in the next room or not, *signor*. That is the proof. Si, *signor*?"

I have also discovered in *The Literary Digest* for August 26, 1916, an advertisement showing Zenatello giving an Edison 'tone test' to prove there was no difference between the sound of his voice as recorded by Edison and his singing in person.

The Edison Co. sometimes showed jealousy because Victor (H.M.V.) had signed most of the great operatic artists to exclusive contracts before the Diamond Discs were produced, thus making it hard for Edison to obtain outstanding singers. There was frequent comment in *Diamond Points* that 'the only argument the talking machine people can make is that Edison doesn't have the big artists.' A touch of malice is detectable in the following from the December, 1916, issue quoting a Boston music critic as comparing Caruso unfavorably to Zenatello:

'ZENATELLO AND CARUSO. We have been asked to reprint the following excerpt from a critique written by Olin Downes, music critic of the *Boston Post*, on April 8, 1916:

"Giovanni Zenatello sang this role (*Rhadames in Aida*) a hundred times better than Mr Caruso sang it last night."

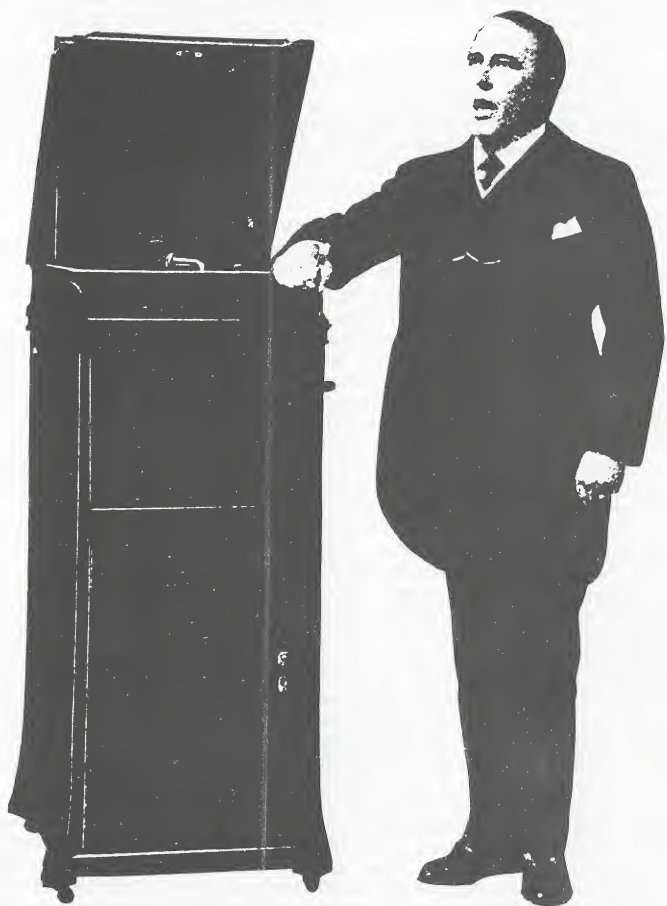
'Mr Downes evidently found much that he did not like in Mr Caruso's voice. He speaks of the "often atrocious singing of Mr Caruso". He called the tenor's tones "thin and unsteady" and said that he was guilty of "a hundred exaggerations and departures from a pure style". He said that Mr Caruso was often "shouting at the top of his voice". He brings his critique to a close by saying, "The laws of song were nothing to him."

This boils down, of course, to an effort to convince Edison dealers that it doesn't matter much if Caruso doesn't make Edison records, because he's not good, anyway!

In March, 1917, *Diamond Points* published an interview with another Italian tenor, Guido Ciccolini, who expressed much the same opinion concerning his records as Zenatello had:

'The Edison?' Ciccolini's face became serious. 'It is wonderful, *Signor*, wonderful. In Italy I heard my voice on a talking machine and it made me mad. It was not my voice, it was nobody's voice. I do not sing through my nose. Then I came to America and someone told me that Mr Edison could Re-Create my voice. I did not believe it. I thought it was another talking machine, and I did not want to hear my voice on a talking machine again. But no, *Signore*. I sing for the Edison, and when I hear it I am so thrilled I begin to sing and it was my voice over again. Mr Edison has Re-Created my voice. He has put Ciccolini on a—what you call it?—a deesc. I am glad to have my voice Re-Created by Mr Edison.'

Zenatello and Ciccolini seem to have had a remarkably similar way of expressing themselves, but perhaps that may be accounted for by their common nationality. At any rate, the excerpts from their interviews are submitted for their inherent historic interest. And I feel it only right to add that I have discussed their recordings with dozens of men and women who made records in the pre-electric period. All who had sung for several companies said only the Edison reproduced their voice as it was. In the States, at least, before 1925, there was virtually no demurrer, even among owners of other instruments, to the proposition that the New Edison was the only device that reproduced music as (disregarding the scratch) it actually was sung or played.



From *The Literary Digest* for August 26, 1916, p.477

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